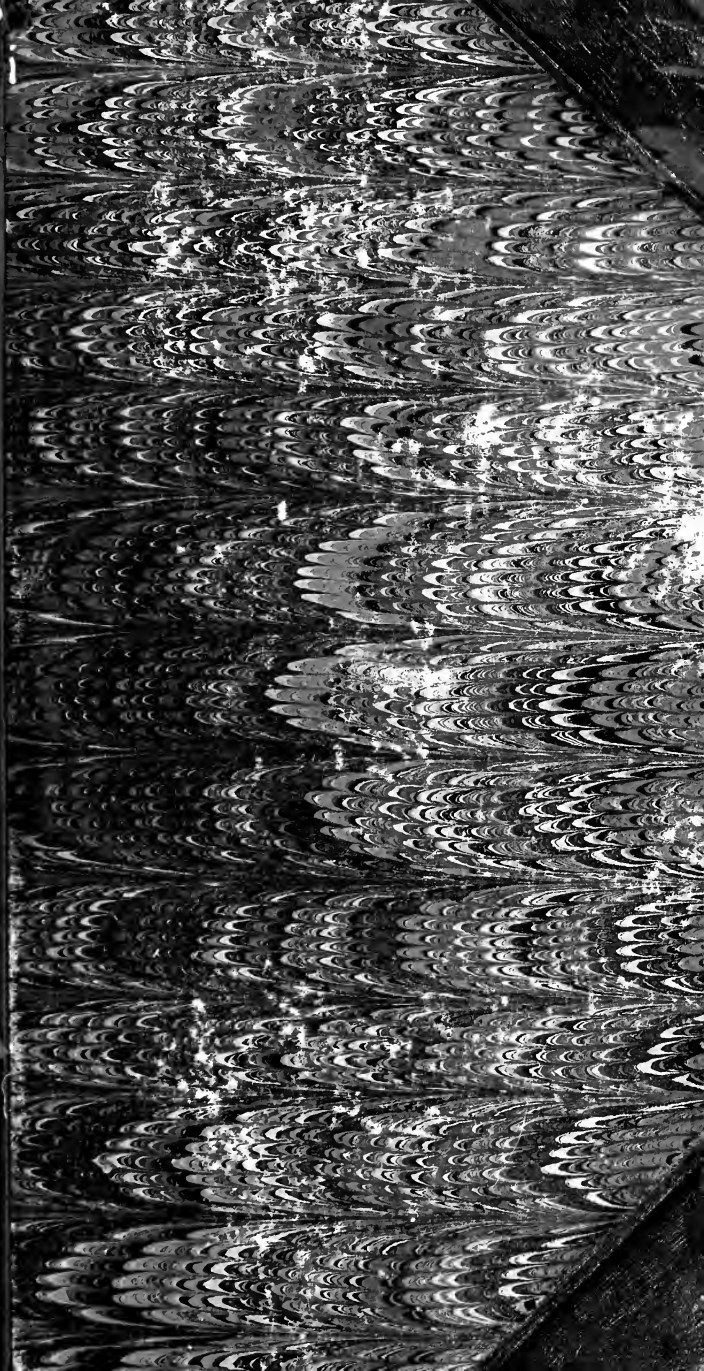


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THE IMPOSTOR;

OR,

BORN WITHOUT A CONSCIENCE.

ILLUSTRATED.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL III.

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THE IMPOSTOR.

CHAPTER I.

DOWN AMONGST THE DEAD MEN.

Not far from Hampstead stands, or stood at the time we write of, a lonely cottage, or rather hut of the most miserable and dilapidated contour. It was inhabited, and in fact belonged to a man who, as he never was known to work or seek for labour, and avoided the society of his equals in society with morose repulsiveness, had acquired for himself a very evil report in the neighbourhood. The village

gossips imputed to him a taste for burglary, highway robbery, horse-stealing, and even burking, although as none of them had ever caught him in the act of indulging any of these *penchants*, the assertion was somewhat hazardous. But the characters of poor people are not thought worth protecting by the enlightened jurisdiction of this happy country ; it is only for the rich that actions for defamation exist. However, Lionel Valence, for such was the aristocratic appellation of the owner of the hut, neither knew nor cared what was said of him. Like the libertine Don in the opera, he ‘lived upon his money,’ and it was surprising how well he managed to live, considering the wretched aspect of his domicile. The questions of the curious he treated with contemptuous silence, and when the pious curate of the parish, impelled by religious zeal, or the spirit of inquisitiveness, or both, called to remonstrate with him upon his non-appear-

ance in church, he asked him to take a cigar—positively suggested a *weed* !

“ A *what*, sir ?” said the startled clergyman

“ A real Havannah ; but, perhaps, you prefer a pipe ?”

“ This jesting is ill-timed ; I called to—”

“ This calling is ill-timed—and when a gentleman offers hospitality—what are you staring about you so for ?”

Well might the curate stare, for with the exception of a miserable bedstead and an old broken chair, the one room which the hut contained was utterly destitute of furniture.

“ Perhaps you would like to look under the bed and up the chimney,” said Valence with a brutal sneer. The dress of this man, which was of the best materials and quite new, formed a strange contrast with the bare and poverty-stricken aspect of the room. It may

he imagined that the pious clerk did not adventure upon a second visit.

But beneath this miserable hut were vaults of the most spacious dimensions, which, from a peculiarity of the situation, were perfectly free from damp,* and in these the eccentric and mysterious Valence made his abode.

It was night, and in the largest of these subterranean apartments were seated a man and a woman of the most striking exterior. We shall have occasion to describe them pre-

* Every body who has been "up the Rhine" must have visited the chapel at the Kreutsberg, where the bodies of some monks are exhibited in a most extraordinary state of preservation. I had a great toe of one of the old fellows—judging by his length, the abbot of the monastery—which I stole as a relic, in defiance of a local tradition of the dire punishment which once overtook another "Englander," under similar circumstances—a case of inevitable haunting ; but the story is, by this time, as Pistol would say, "base, common, and popular."

sently, meanwhile a few words as to the place in which they were seated.

There was a rude fire-place at one end of the vault, the chimney of which communicated with that of the hut above. A dead looking fire was burning in the grate, on either side of which sat the two persons we have alluded to. From the centre of the arched roof hung a lamp of antique form and black with age, which would have reminded those unversed in antiquarian lore, of the little black teapots in use amongst the lower classes, to which it bore a remarkable resemblance. This lamp shed a faint, flickering light upon those objects in its immediate neighbourhood, to wit, a table on which the preparations for an excellent supper, of cold meat and wine, were visible, but left the more distant parts of the vault in comparative darkness, so that on first entering, a stranger would not have perceived the stone coffins piled one upon another, by which two sides of the cavern were lined.

A door at the end of the vault immediately opposite to the fire-place, opened to further catacombs. The floor was covered with thick mats, and the entrance was through a trap door beneath the bedstead we mentioned as standing in the hut, and which was light and easily pushed aside ; moreover, it was so ingeniously contrived, that the most vigilant officers of the police might have searched the cottage without suspecting its existence.

The man we spoke of was tall, at least, he appeared so, from his extraordinary meagreness, though in reality he was not more than five feet and six or seven inches in height. His head was large and round, like the knob of a poker or a walking stick. His face was like that of an overgrown boy, large, squinting eyes of a blue so pale as to be scarcely perceptible, a mouth so small that it scarcely looked like a specimen of that useful feature, but rather reminded one of a hole burnt in

a sheet of brown paper with the red-hot point of the poker, whose head we have already used as a simile; his hair red, stunted, and wiry, overshadowed his low, unintellectual forehead, and eyes, devoid of eyebrows; and his nose was turned up in an oblique direction towards his left temple; his age was about five-and thirty.

He wore an old, threadbare, brown great-coat, and dirty white trousers, with boot-lacing up the middle, and round his neck a red comforter was twisted some half-a-dozen times. Reversing the laws of anatomical beauty, which directs that the limbs should be thickest at the roots, and gradually taper towards the extremities, the arms and legs of this creature resembled billiard queues, and terminated in hands and feet of most disproportionate magnitude. His *tout ensemble* conveyed the notion of hideous weakness and impotent malignancy.

The woman, on the other hand, might

almost be termed beautiful, her figure was of fine though voluptuous proportions, and her chesnut hair consorted well with her fair complexion and bold hazel eye. Her dress was slovenly, and so carelessly fastened, that it gaped in front almost to her waist, thus exposing a bosom of the most perfect shape and whiteness, on which the eyes of her companion rested, unperceived by the woman, who was wrapped in meditation, with a ferocious lust he dared not avow yet longed to gratify.

“ I wonder he does not return,” said the woman at length, in a tone of anxiety.

“ Who return ?”

“ Your brother, of course—who else could I mean.”

“ How should I know—perhaps some *friend* of yours.”

“ Friend! how should I have friends ?”

“ You do not understand me.”

“ No.”

“ I thought of the man I saw leaving here the other evening.”

“ Ah ! you saw him ?”

“ Yes, I saw him, what did he come for ?”

“ What is that to you ?”

“ He was not ill-looking.”

“ Then he was not like you.”

“ I would be like him in one respect.”

“ What is that ?”

The man started up and attempted to throw his arm round her waist.

“ Stand back !

“ I will tell my brother of your visitors.”

“ I will tell him of your visitors !”

“ Hush ! I hear some one—it is he !”

“ Beware—he would strangle you, if—”

The man whistled a discord.

The trap-door opened, a man of herculean frame and a huge, bronzed countenance surrounded by red, shaggy whiskers dropped into the vault.

“ Ah ! Li, is it you ?” said the woman.

“Don’t you see me,” replied Lionel Valance, roughly—“but I am not alone, I have brought a friend with me.”

“Ah! he follows your example,” whispered the brother to the woman, with a malicious grin.

She retorted by a menacing frown.

“Come along, let yourself drop, and do not be afraid my buck!” said Valence, speaking to some one above, who hesitated to descend.

“But why cannot you confer up here?”

“Because it is necessary that we should trust one another, and if you hesitate, I shall send the contents of one of my *barrels* into your *hogshead*!”

So saying, the master of the hut pointed a pistol towards the trap door, whilst his brother and mistress, for such was the position of the bold lady, laughed most vociferously at his professional facetiousness.

Seeing that he had no choice, the person above at once descended in the same manner

as Valence, and was not a little surprised at the appearance of the place in which he found himself.

“ Nice quarters ?” said Lionel, with a laugh.

“ Very,” replied the stranger.

“ You see those coffins ?”

“ Yes,” replied the stranger, after a pause, and with a slight snudder.

“ They contain the bones of my ancestors.”

“ Indeed ?”

“ Yes, in those stone boxes sleep the old heros of my race—about here was their domain—they were never a very wealthy set—so they used to sally out from their strong tower and pick up the crumbs that providence threw in their way. I am the last of their race, I am aristocratical, a conservative—I follow their example in my humble way.”

“ It does you credit.”

“ I think it does—this hut and the barren field is the last remnant of our estates; I

would not disgrace the noble blood that runs in my veins by turning tradesman or mechanic, so I have become—what I am.”

There was much of pride in the tone and aspect of the last of the Valences, as he uttered these spirited sentiments.

“And now,” said the stranger, “suppose we arrange at once—”

“Ah! true—but I am very hungry, what say you to some supper, we can talk as we eat.”

“With pleasure,” replied the stranger, but had we not better—”

“I understand you, speak without witnesses?—no, it is not necessary, I have no secrets from Jack or Julia.”

“Very well---excuse my caution---I am a lawyer---”

“Then I must be on my guard that you do not pick my pocket,” said Valence, with another laugh, which was re-echoed by his companions. “By-the-bye, Julia, I should

tell you how I came to make this gentleman's acquaintance. About an hour ago I met him walking alone, and very slowly and dejectedly; from which I erroneously concluded that the poor man was weighed down by the weight of his pockets, I, accordingly, prescribed a lead pill as a permanent cure for the disease. The mere idea acted as a pecuniary emetic, and I was, I assure you, extremely shocked to see so respectable a looking person make so disgraceful an exhibition. Fifteen shillings and some coppers—no more on my honor! However the gentleman offers business—I don't much like it, but it seems there is a good haul to be made, so I suppose it must be done."

"You will not repent it," said the stranger.

"What time did you say he passed?"

"Probably about half past ten—he goes to take money to a girl he seduced, and has a magnificent gold snuff-box, set with diamonds,

a gift from the Emperor of Russia, I have heard."

"And pray what is his name?"

"His name?"

"Yes, his name, I must know that for fear of any mistake."

"You cannot mistake him after the description I have given you."

"I don't know that; the night may be dark——"

"But it is moonlight."

"No matter, there are clouds---in short, I will not move a step in the matter unless I know his name," said the robber, resolutely.

"Well then," said the stranger with hesitation, "his name is---Count Mesmer de Biron."

"Count de Biron!—what?—the man who killed Lord Granville the other day at his masquerade—by accident?"

"I don't know whether he killed him by *accident* or no," replied the stranger savagely,

“but he is the man of all others I hold in the deepest hatred!”

“Then why don’t you settle him yourself?” said the robber with undisguised contempt.

“Because he could recognize me in case he happened to escape, and because——”

“You are a lawyer, and would rather risk the neck of another than yourself,” completed the highwayman in a brutal tone.

“Perhaps so,” said the other with well affected coolness, “however, in one way or the other, it shall be done, this very night, if he comes; so choose, quickly, whether you undertake it or not?”

“I do!” said the robber, “he shall be hermetically sealed in one of those stone coffins before morning—and how much do you say you will give?”

“A hundred guineas if you succeed!”

“And how am I to know that you will keep your word?”

“Believe me,” said Monville, “for it was he

I shall be but too eager to ascertain the result of your enterprise, to drink the cup of vengeance I have so long revelled in contemplating. This man is my most deadly foe, to him I owe the loss of —, but no matter. I hate him with such hatred that I would spend my last shilling, traverse a hemisphere to look upon his corpse and to feel certain that he no longer breathed, no longer lived to grind, to threaten, to torment me, to compel me to be his slave, and yet to grovel in the dust before him. No! you need not fear—I shall come, the money, and more, shall be yours, if once this detested fiend lies cold and stark before me!"

These words the lawyer uttered, with the frightful energy of desperation, in tones that carried conviction to the hearts of his auditors.

"And your name—your own name?" said the robber.

"*My* name?"

"No—stay—your *card*?"

The ingenuity of the robber struck Monville

forcibly in these last words, for a moment he hesitated, then thrusting his hand into his waistcoat pocket, he produced the card of one of his clients, and handed it to the highwayman.

“Mr. Wilson—very well,” said the robber.

“And now good evening,” said Monville, “I must be going—you will not forget to strike home!” added he in a lower tone, “mind, he must *die*—no mercy!”

“No, no, replied the robber fiercely.”

“One word more, this Count de Biron is a perfect devil—he will show fight.”

“All the better, I dislike stabbing in cold blood.”

“But he will be unarmed, so there will be no great difficulty.”

“Fear not—he shall have three inches of *this* in his breast!” and the robber displayed a long narrow knife of most formidable aspect.

“It is well!” said the lawyer, and he ascen-

ded a ladder which Jack placed for him to the trap door.

“You will accompany me Jack,” said the robber, and keep watch at some distance for the (peelers.*) I shall take my stand opposite the hill in the shade of the trees, by the park palings—Julia, “if I do not return within two days, conclude that I am either a prisoner in jail, or obliged to make myself scarce in this part of the land. I shall write to you to tell you what to do—give me my barkers, will you, and kiss me, my girl; now for this young fashionable! By the way, Jack, that fellow Wilson seemed to think there was something more than accident in the death of the Lord, what’s-his name? the other evening---if so we are instruments of Justice for once in a way.

“Yes,” said Jack, sullenly, “perhaps the gentleman carries a sword-stick?”

“Not he, they are quite out of fashion!”

* Vulgo policemen.

“ Well come along---what shall be the signal ?”

“ Whistle ‘ Nix my dolly,’ if you see the Count or any body like him, and ‘ down amongst the dead men,’ if you see a blue coat.”

“ And what am I to get for my trouble ?”

“ A fourth of the profits you avaricious coward.”

“ I don’t think that is——”

“ If you grumble you shall have nothing,” said the robber, sharply, giving his accomplice a contemptuous glance, and a fierce kick upon his meagre shins, “ and now let us saddle the horses and be off !”

CHAPTER II.

HIGHWAY ROBBERY.

ON the north side of Regent's Park, and immediately opposite Primrose Hill, that far famed resort of cockney pedestrians in their Sunday excursions, by which the summit of the mount, formerly a peak, has now been worn down to a flat surface of considerable area, there is a tract of road about a mile in extent, utterly destitute of lamps or policemen, which at night time presents an aspect at once

dismal and uninviting. On one side the dark and dense plantations, surrounding and overshadowing the palings of the park; on the other, the hill and the adjoining fields. A faint row of lights in the distance intimate the existence of the Hampstead Road, and serve by contrast to render yet more gloomy the darkness enveloping the locality we speak of. It is a place where, if chance should ever take you alone on foot and in the night time, you involuntarily think of ghosts or footpads, quicken your pace, grasp more firmly your stick or umbrella, and strain your eyes in search of the distant lamps, which, even to the most timid, afford a consciousness of tranquil security. But, if you are not timid, neither care for footpads nor spectres, (there are a few old blasted trees by the way-side, nearest the hill, eminently ghost-like in appearance) and are not in a particular hurry to reach home by some particular hour—your systematic bed time, you should ascend the

hill of Primrose, and having reached the apex, gaze round you on the vast metropolis of the world with its long lines of brilliant lamps—a sea of lights, with here and there a brighter dash of of effulgence, it is worth looking at. we assure you, and if you have a camp-stool with you and a cigar case, a fine place where

“The mind smokes calmly
Like Vesuvius—”

as a poetical friend of ours grotesquely expresses himself in one of his odes,* whose originality of idea is unequalled in this age of commonplaces. Perhaps we may treat the reader to another extract or two before we

* The ‘Student’s Note Book,’ it has only been published for private circulation. How much the public have lost thereby can be known only to those who have seen and appreciated it. But Mr. B. B—is a man of fortune, and perhaps thinks more of his hunters than his muses.

have done, despite the treason of such a proceeding.

Along the road we have described, rode a solitary horseman of erect and stately form upon a tall black steed,, who, by his proud step and frequent haughty tossings of his head, seemed to share his master's exaltation. As the horseman passed him, a man of ungainly aspect, seated upon the railings by the way-side commenced loudly whistling a popular air.

“ And so to-morrow,” thought Mesmer, neither heeding nor indeed perceiving the aforesaid whistler, “ to-morrow I shall be Lord Wilsdown!—a peer of England's realm! —I, the bastard---the shop-boy---the---ha, ha! ---it would be curious to see the expression of my dear friends, now so eager to court my favor, so delighted to receive me at their houses --- the proudest of our aristocracy, if some voice from the abyss should suddenly reveal the truth, should suddenly say---‘ this

is he who was once called Alfred Milford, the son of an old miser of a shopkeeper'—or some miraculous event should disclose the tissue of what the vulgar term unscrupulous crimes of the most heinous description, by which I have arrived at this elevated position. I cannot help despising a world so easily duped, and who knows but that some day I may tire of the farce, rise after dinner, and give some twenty or thirty of my distinguished guests a brief sketch of the Right Honourable Count Mesmer de Biron, Baron of Wilsdown's, &c., &c, (by that time I shall be a knight of two or three orders, perhaps a viscount or an earl) private history. I can imagine their looks of horror and surprise. It would take some time to convince them that I was not joking or a lunatic—ha, ha, ha!"

And the impostor laughed heartily at these facetious fancies of his own creation.

There was something of an unearthly scorn.

a 'godless glee' in the adventurer's laugh which tingled strangely in the ears of the expectant robber, who, at this moment, spurred his horse forward and caught that of Biron with one hand, whilst in the other he flourished significantly his long and glittering dagger.

"What do you mean, ruffian?" said Mesmer, angrily, aiming a blow at the head of the highwayman with his riding whip, and thus luckily intercepting the arm of Valence, as it descended with the dangerous knife and slightly wounded our hero. "What! do you want—my money?—you shall have it, because I am unarmed, and you have a knife and pistols as I see, otherwise you should——"

"Well, give up the blunt!" said the robber still more bluntly, "and keep your boasting for a better opportunity."

After the first shock they had recoiled to some distance from one another, and Biron had reversed his whip in order to derive the

benefit from the heavy handle, which afforded no contemptible weapon.

Meanwhile the robber had drawn a pistol from his pocket, and presented it at the head of our hero, who at once gave up all idea of flight, which, the superiority of his beast would have otherwise rendered of extreme facility, and resolved to meet the robber upon his own grounds.

“ I will give up every thing I have about me, my purse, my gold snuff-box, even my breast-pin, and the ring upon my finger, if you will let me depart unhurt,” said Mesmer, with as much cowardice in his tone as the natural combativeness of his disposition would admit of.

“ Hem !” thought the robber, “ this is not much like the devil that Wilson talked of—well,” said he aloud, “ shell out ! and be quick about it, my fine count, and just drop that d——d whip of yours, or I shall send a little lead through your carcase, Mr. Biron !”

"You know me then?" said Biron, dropping his riding whip as the robber requested, and feeling in his pocket for his snuff-box.

"Yes," said the highwayman, gruffly, "I know you, though I never had the pleasure of being introduced to you."

"Here is the snuff-box," said Biron, "but first lower that pistol, it has doubtless hair triggers?"

"I should *think* so," said the ruffian.

"An accident might happen—"

"Don't be such an infernal shivering coward!" growled the robber, scornfully.

The eyes of Mesmer flashed fire at these words, but he advanced timidly towards the highwayman, and extended his arm to its utmost length, offered his snuff-box to the robber.

"Take it," said he, "it is more valuable than it looks, it was a gift to my grandfather from the Czar of all the Russias, I will redeem it for any sum you may propose."

“ We will arrange all that presently—give me the box, and fork out your purse at once—if it pleases you, *my lord*,” added Valence, sarcastically.

Strange as it may seem, this ‘*my lord*,’ sounded most pleasantly to the ears of the embryo Baron of Wilsdown, and he frankly extended the valuable snuff-box, the gift of the illustrious Czar of all the Russias, to the robber, who eagerly attempted to grasp it; but at the moment he did so, Biron, with great adroitness, dashed its contents in the face of his enemy, and, at the same time, contrived to give his horse a kick, which caused it to set off at a brisk trot in the direction of the York and Albany Inn, which stands near the north-west corner of the Park.

The robber, blinded by the snuff and suffering excruciating pain, almost lost his seat, and dropping his pistol in his confusion, was carried unwillingly onwards, he knew not whither.

But Mesmer, having caught up his whip, pursued the bandit with such speed, that he was enabled to lay over his back and shoulders a shower of blows, which the other could neither return nor parry; nor could he stop his horse, for Biron let every third blow fall upon the animal's crupper, until it finally burst into a gallop, and dashed away at a most furious pace. The horse of our adventurer however being of infinitely higher mettle, kept bravely by its side, and the robber absolutely yelled beneath the blows of the count's ponderous riding whip. He no longer doubted Biron's title to the epithet of 'devil' bestowed upon him by the lawyer. His rage knew no limits, and he determined at every hazard, even yet to execute his murderous project.

By degrees the robber's power of sight in some measure returned, although the smarting of his eyes was still indescribably painful. He suddenly turned round on his saddle, and

grasped Mesmer by the collar, at the same moment his horse scoured from under him, for he had already lost his stirrups, and left him hanging upon the collar of the count. To the latter this attack was quite unexpected ; however, he struck the hand of the robber with the handle of his whip till they were covered with blood. In vain he strove to shake off his foe, for some distance the bandit was dragged along the ground, but his grasp did not relax, and Mesmer, having irrecoverably lost his equilibrium, was torn from his horse, and came, still grasped by the robber, with great violence to the ground. Luckily, he also managed to get clear of his stirrups.

A deadly struggle now commenced ; with his left hand Biron had seized the wrist of the robber pertaining to the hand in which he still held his formidable knife ; with the right Mesmer hammered the countenance of his antagonist, who strove to shift his grasp from

the collar to the throat of our hero, whilst he struggled to obtain free play for his dagger, which would at once have decided the contest.

“Wretch !” said Biron, “drop your dagger and I will let you go harmless ; remember we are close to the houses, and my shouts for help will be heard.

“It is too late !” growled the bandit, and his hand was upon the neckcloth of his opponent.

By a desperate blow Mesmer, dislodged two of the teeth of the robber, from whose mouth a sanguinary foam now issued.

The robber was a man of prodigious muscular power ; he had been a prize-fighter ; his arms and legs were nearly twice the thickness of Mesmer’s ; it was like a contest between an Apollo and a Hercules.

Biron felt how small was his chance of success against such an antagonist, and a bitter pang of despairing rage thrilled in the heart

of the daring impostor at the thought that his unparalleled career was about to be closed by the superiority of mere brute force, by the bestial vengeance of a wretch he had already outwitted and horsewhipped !

The robber had now wound his hand into the cravat of our adventurer, who had several times shouted in vain for assistance.

Biron felt that all was lost ; his strength was rapidly failing ; he could scarcely keep off the hand in which the robber held his knife ; a ferocious gleam of triumph shot from the eyes of his enemy.

“ My life !—I will enrich you for—” Mesmer ejaculated incoherently ; he could say no more.

The robber’s only reply was to twist his hand still tighter in the neckcloth of the Count. He had never wavered in his intention of murdering Biron, for strange as it may seem, this miserable descendant of the noble house of Valence was not a man to break his

plighted word, and he had promised Monville that it should be done. Besides it was evident that the latter had completely set his mind upon the death of the Count de Biron, and might, were a mere robbery committed, have even lodged an information, in his indignation at so paltry an advantage being taken of him.

Biron was beginning to get black in the face, his strength and breath were alike rapidly diminishing ; an idea struck him ; he determined to make one last effort.

The road, on the side next to the fields, was bounded by a slight railing and a ditch of considerable depth ; towards this Mesmer manoeuvred, and suddenly striking, with all his remaining strength, the elbow of the robber with the handle of his whip, which he had all along retained, he was lucky enough to produce as he intended, that extraordinary effect, in vulgar parlance termed " hitting the funny bone," which everybody must have frequently

experienced. As by an electric shock, the robber felt his arm for a moment paralysed ; Biron threw off his hand from his throat, inhaled a full breath of air just in time to avert asphyxia, and at the same time relaxed his hold upon the wrist of his ferocious enemy, who instantly raised his knife to strike a deadly blow, but before it could descend, Mesmer gave the robber so violent a push, that, standing as he did, with a gap in the railings immediately behind him, he slipped, lost his footing, and fell backwards into the ditch.

At the sound of the splash caused by the robber's fall into the mud, our adventurer felt his strength and courage revive, and shouted loudly for assistance. He did not attempt to run, for he felt that his strength was not equal to it, that the bandit would have instantly overtaken him, and by a stab from his long knife, dispatched him without further trouble ; but he took his stand at the gap in

the railings, and as often as the robber attempted to scramble up from the ditch, he thrust him back with kicks and blows from his whip, still continuing to shout for assistance. At length he heard footsteps—they were coming to his aid—but his head was dizzy, his brain began to reel—a mist of many colours seemed to hang confusedly before his eyes—the robber had regained the road—Biron aimed one desperate blow at the head of his foe—and he fell senseless to the ground.

When the three policemen he had heard came up, they found the Count and his would-be murderer extended side by side, the face of the latter covered with blood.

Late that night Mesmer reached home in a cab; the next day he was in a high fever and delirious.

CHAPTER III.

IN THE INTERIM.

ALTHOUGH Lord Friskerton *was*, Mesmer de Biron was *not* ignorant of the fact that the deceased, Lord Granville, had been on the most intimate terms with the Villersdens in Italy, and that, in fact, Granville was either engaged, or on the verge of becoming so, to the lovely Dowager.

The Count had conceived for the Duchess a passion of the most violent description ; but

between his desires and their consummation stood two most formible objects, Lord Granville and his own wife. To rid himself both of the Peer and the Countess he at once determined, and began to revolve in the dark abyss of his spirit the means by which both objects might be effected, when, as we have seen, an accident of the most tragical nature freed him from the dangerous rivalry of the unfortunate Granville.

Everybody pitied Biron as the unconscious author of so terrible a catastrophe, and the Count went into deep mourning, appearing for some time to everybody he encountered, sunk into a profound melancholy, which his friends, especially Lord Friskerton and Prince Aurelius de Rosenberg, endeavoured constantly to enliven. Some time passed away, and he had gradually resumed his cheerfulness, appeared again in society, and in the House of Commons. His personality was, if anything, rendered more interesting by his homicide, he

was more talked about than ever, and became, indeed, one of those “not to know whom argues yourself unknown.” To be sure, now and then people asked the question, like Ezzelin of Lara, “whence came he?—what doth he here?” but the story of the miserly old Count his father, his morose and solitary life, and strange habits, was by this time so well known, that these enquiries were of little import. Besides it was quite impossible to think anything very bad of a young and handsome noble, owner of Wilsdown Castle, and apparently possessing an income of princely magnificence.

There was another mysterious story, too, got whispered about, though vague in its particulars, and generally accompanied by significant nods and shrugs of the shoulders in the narration, and this curiously enough, was not far distant from the truth, viz., that Biron was, in fact, a natural son of the great Lord Byron, and this daring assertion was generally

backed by allusions to a family likeness, his talent for improvising the *lines to my son*, written by the deceased poet, which have hitherto never been accounted for, and the economy of Lord B. in Italy, when he was evidently saving a fortune for his beloved, though illegitimate offspring, which had, doubtless, accumulated immensely during the young Count's minority.

These tales did no harm to our adventurer's popularity. Young, rich, prepossessing, he could not fail in his progress towards the very throne of fashion, and soon "The Biron" was the vehicle *a la mode*, and the Bironic tailor the only tailor in the world. His taste in pictures, in furniture, in cookery, was quoted at the clubs, and in the boudoir and at the moment that he sold—not his principles, he had none—but his political power, for a peerage, *Lord Wilsdown* had reached the culminating point of his celebrity.

But Mesmer's thirst for excitement was

insatiable ; no sooner had he succeeded in grasping one object of his ambition than he proposed to himself some new goal, and dashed away in the renewed pursuit. Truly there is more pleasure in the chase than in the possession.

Augusta had become indifferent to him, although they had not yet been married a year ; but it was of course impossible that there could be any real confidence between them ; the pure mind of Augusta would have revolted from the infamous devices to which Mesmer resorted, and where there is no confidence, there is little sympathy, and where there is little sympathy, there is little love.

It is possible that had Mesmer encountered a woman equally as intellectual, fiery, and ambitious as himself, with an equally lax view of social morality, a veritable and lasting love might have existed between them from the sympathy of their respective natures, for there is sympathy even in evil. This, however, is

mere hypothesis ; as it was, the intelligent, beautiful, and affectionate Augusta became insipid to his novelty loving imagination. Like the other victims of his selfish passion, (and Clara was but one of many) some little inferior to the Countess in beauty, and innocence, she was now destined to be thrown aside for another, and on the vision of the Duchess of Villersden ran all his thoughts ; that she should be his he determined, and regarded his wife as an annoying bar to the accomplishment of his projects. He behaved towards her with a cool politeness which rendered her completely miserable, and vented his spleen in sneers at her relations, whom he treated so coldly, that they became rare guests at his house. To Colonel Rossmill in particular, he made made himself obnoxious, by his unceasing jests, and witticisms, on the science of phrenology, to which that gentleman was devoted, and he offended Merlmore, by his decisive refusal to perceive the necessity of lending him some money in a great emergency.

It may be as well here to state retrospectively that Adolphus Cashall expired some hours previous to the arrival of Mr. Merlmore at his house at Blackheath, and "made no sign," he died very suddenly, after receiving a letter from one Thomas Smith. With him perished one of Mesmer's most dangerous enemies, and some secrets which, had they come to the knowledge of Merlmore, might have led to investigations by no means agreeable to the former.

Having made these necessary explanations, we must now hasten to resume the thread of our history, for events are now crowding thick upon the Impostor, dark clouds hang threateningly over his destiny, a storm is brooding—the worm trodden on, will turn at length—and the bold, the wily Mesmer lies raving on a fevered couch, unconscious of the storm about to burst.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PHYSICIAN.

“THE Doctor is here, my dear Mesmer,” said Augusta in a gentle voice approaching the bed side of her husband.

“Let him come in,” said Biron calmly.

Sir Henry —— entered the room.

“Permit me to feel your pulse,” said the physician.

“It is not necessary.”

“Not necessary---how ? you are joking ?”

“I am perfectly serious, Sir Henry ; you were sent for without my permission.”

“But my lord---By the way allow me to congratulate you on your elevation ; I saw it announced in the *Times* this morning---it is

not customary to ask the permission of people in your state as to whether they will be cured or not."

"In my state---what state do you mean?" said the Count raising himself on his elbow.

"Why you have had fever and delirium; are you not aware of it?"

"Possibly; but I am not delirious now."

"But you are very feverish; however, I will prescribe something for you, and in two or three days--"

"I shall get up to-morrow," said the patient obstinately, sinking back upon the pillow.

"Indeed, my lord, I hope you will be guilty of no such imprudence."

"Excuse me, Sir Henry, but I forget at the moment—are you an olopathist or a Ho-mœopathist?"

"My lord, I—"

"Because," continued Mesmer gravely, "to whichever of these systems you may belong, I must decidedly beg leave to disagree with you in toto."

“The head affected,” muttered the doctor, “some lesion of the brain, perhaps, occasioned by the blows of the ruffian who attempted to rob him—pity the rascal contrived to escape from the police!”

“The cold water or hydropathic cure will be my policy,” said Biron, “so you see, as we do not take similar scientific views of the case, it is useless to prescribe anything for me.”

“Really my lord, I hope you will not trifle with your health by trying any absurd experiment.”

“Of course, doctor,” said Lord Wilsdown innocently, “you have visited several of the most noted hydropathic institutions, observed the progress of cases under the treatment, and seen the best works upon the subject?”*

* I think it necessary here to state that this chapter was written long previous to the publication of Sir E. B. Lytton's letter on Hydropathy in the New Monthly Magazine.

“ Indeed,” replied Sir Henry, “ I have been much more usefully occupied than to waste my time upon such ridiculous quackery.”

“ Oh !” said Biron, “ that is a pity ; it is very effectual in many cases, indeed there are very few diseases incurable either by cold water or animal magnetism, so simple are the remedies of nature---do you often apply magnetism, Sir Henry ?”

“ Apply magnetism ! I should consider myself a disgrace to my profession.”

“ What do you think of it then ?”

“ That it is a tissue of unmitigated humbug.”*

“ You consider the records of the innumerable cures in Germany, France, and even England and America as purely fabulous ?”

“ Why not exactly,” said the physician a little confused, for he began to perceive that

* A favourite epithet of the faculty for remedies they know nothing about, and are too lazy and empirical to investigate.

he was exposing his ignorance, " I fancy imagination has a great deal to do with it."

" Do you ever cure by imagination ?"

" Sometimes," said the physician, " it is a useful auxiliary ; but I must be going." Sir Henry looked at his watch. " I have many calls to make, so pray let me feel your pulse, and prescribe for you at once ; you will over-exert yourself by talking, and bring on a return of delirium."

" No, no ;" said Biron, " to *return* to what I was saying, you allow that imagination often effects cures ?"

" Yes, I must say I have known some very odd instances of its effects."

" Then why not always apply this tremendous power in your practice ? I will tell you why ; it is because the faculty are ever opposed to new discoveries, however wonderful, because they are, in nine cases out of ten, blind students of secondary causes, to whom the workings of the spirit and its mighty effects

upon the corporeal frame are as a sealed book. You feel the pulse, you regard the tongue ; but you never think of enquiring the state of the patient's mind, in which, perhaps, the origin and sustaining cause of his illness is to be found. How can I, Sir Henry, after your confessions of ignorance and indifference on two such important points as those I have mentioned, possibly feel any confidence in your skill ?”

“ Then, my lord, I wish you a very good morning,” and the offended physician took his departure.

It is almost incredible how bigotted and dogmatical are the general run of the medical world in this country, how obstinately they refuse to investigate facts, with what careless indifference, and even falsehood, they speak of every new doctrine that is broached, and how candidly, almost boastingly, they confess their ignorance. Equally incredible are their attempts at material explanations of vital phenomena, in which the *power*, the *principle*, the

motive energy is almost invariably passed over, and that most important question quietly shirked, if not altogether overlooked.

Biron rang the bell for his valet.

“ Sago, let me have an unlimited supply of spring water and blankets.”

“ Yes, sir—my lord, I mean.”

“ And let no doctors come to worry me ; I am afraid,” muttered he, “ that fever makes one speak the truth too carelessly—I wish I had not said anything about magnetism !”

In ten minutes our hero had drunk ten glasses of water, and was perspiring beneath a mountain of blankets. The next morning he awoke, after a refreshing sleep, perfectly free from fever, somewhat weak and languid, but in other respects quite well. Towards afternoon he arose, and having performed his toilet and breakfasted in his dressing room, descended the stairs with the intention of writing some letters in his library.

CHAPTER V.

REVELATIONS.

As Mesmer passed the door of the drawing-room, he fancied that he could hear voices in earnest conference, and his curiosity being excited, he stepped noiselessly into the adjoining room — he was habited in his slippers and *robe de chambre*—one of the folding doors was ajar, so that he could hear distinctly every word uttered.

“ Oh ! this is terrible, this is shameful ! ” exclaimed Augusta.

“ My dear lady, I entreat you not to hint—even by the slightest allusion—to *him*, that you have seen me, remember that you have promised---*sworn* to keep faithfully this dreadful secret.”

“ But to think that I am wedded to an impostor --- a swindler ! ---and you say he deserted you ? ”

“ For months together I never saw him, until one day we met by accident ; he pretended not to know me, I followed him to a small shop in the city, his name was then Alfred Milford, he dealt in old books and prints. From that time I frequently came to see him, and he was more kind to me, even gave me several sums of money, though whence he obtained them I cannot conceive, for his poverty appeared great. Oh, lady ! it is a fearful thing to be reduced by the indulgence of ill-regulated passion to become the

pensioner of one for whom everything has been sacrificed---and my family was respectable and honourable --- to see the growing indifference of the being we idolize --- and then his father died, and he went no one knew whither---there was a lawyer made some fuss afterwards, I heard, about a will he had drawn up, leaving the old man's property to some society, but the son was gone, and with him the money, and nobody took up the matter, so it dropped and was forgotten. When I next met Alfred I was in great distress, I had a child starving at home, it was a cold, stormy night, I met him in the street, he was dressed like a man of fashion and affected astonishment at my recognition, he was so much altered that I almost doubted the evidence of my senses, he gave me some money, and we parted. But first I should say he told me that his name was Count Mesmer de Biron——”

“Cursedly incautious of me!” muttered

Biron. "However, she will find herself baffled yet, the malicious hussy!"

"I was so astounded, that for the moment I really believed myself deceived as to his identity. But the eyes of love are keen; the more I reflected upon our meeting, the more I felt convinced that Alfred Milford and the Count de Biron were one and the same person. Some time afterwards I heard he had taken a house; I called upon him, and endeavoured to touch his heart by my supplications. Again he pretended not to know me, but at length assumed an appearance of renewed and repentant tenderness, which my too credulous heart eagerly received as genuine; he then took apartments for me and came occasionally to see me, or rather the child, for on the latter was centred all his attention. He had promised to come some days since, and that was the reason of my calling here to-day. I was ignorant of his being married, and little thought that the last hope I ventured to en-

tain, in connection with this earth, was thus to be crushed and destroyed."

"And this hope?"

"Was that, for the sake of the child, the father would forgive the sin of the mother of which he himself was the cause—and how artfully my innocence was tempted it is not for you to imagine! In short, I cherished the delusive hope that he would yet, by marrying me, restore me to my own esteem, and, in some measure, to the position from which I was degraded—this hope is now for ever blasted. May you never know what it is to be neglected and coldly cast aside—but no, you are so fair, so gentle—even *he* must hesitate before he inflicts pain upon one so lovely!"

"Alas!" said Augusta, "men are so selfish, there are no limits to their cruelty, believe me I sincerely pity you—and I, I too am to be pitied!"

"Yes, madam, to be pitied for listening to such a tirade of nonsense, with such absurd

credulity," said Mesmer, sternly, as he emerged from the ante-room, "accidentally I have overheard your conversation, as also the affectionate, wife-like terms which you have thought proper to apply to me. Perhaps I ought to treat I this with the contempt it deserves; but I am a philosopher, therefore I shall explain the facts which appear, it is true, a little mysterious, for your edification, and the best thing you can do," added he, with bitter sarcasm, "is to display still further your devoted affection for your husband, by retailing these family secrets to all your acquaintances, and doing the utmost in your power to disgrace an honourable and ancient name, which you yourself so unworthily share."

The countenance of Lord Wilsdown was ghastly pale, as he addressed these words to Augusta. To Clara, for she it was with whom the countess had been in conference, he said nothing, but the look of cold, unpitying hate he bent upon her, spoke more than volumes

of the most elaborated execrations. His poor victim, who looked worn and sickly from grief, care, and physical illness, trembled in every joint, whilst Augusta blushed deeply, and, mingled with fear, felt all the shame of a criminal detected in the commission of some outrageous and unpardonable crime, whilst the real criminal stood proud and erect, as a judge before the beings of whose misery he was the author.

“ Firstly, as to my relation with this young person,” said Biron, slowly and distinctly “ it is quite true that, led away by passion and feelings, which we were unable to control, we were mutually guilty of an indiscretion, which led to the result of her exclusion from her father’s house, and the birth of a child. Deeply regretting this youthful error, I endeavoured, the moment it lay in my power, to make every possible reparation—”

“ Except,” said Clara, indignantly, “ the only reparation worthy of a man of honor.”

“ And that,” said Mesmer.

“ Redeeming the promise of marriage, without which you would never have succeeded in seducing me from my father’s home !”

“ Promise of marriage !” exclaimed Biron, “ good heavens, you rave — you forget the immense difference in our rank—the daughter of a petty tradesman, and the Count de Biron ; it is absurd !”

“ You were plain Alfred Milford, and no Count de Biron then ; nor do I believe that you are rightfully so named at this present moment.”

“ No,” said Biron coolly, “ my proper title at present is Lord Wilsdown.”

“ Lord Wilsdown ! merciful heavens ! Alfred Milford, Lord Wilsdown !”

“ Yes ; I have been raised to the peerage, and rightly, too, considering my family, fortune, and position. Now, listen to me Lady Wilsdown, on the strength of information given you by a person whom you had never

before seen, and whose character, even by her own acknowledgment, is by no means free from blemish."

"And is it for you to reproach me with the frailty to which your own?"

"Mesmer, you are unjust as well as unfeeling!" said Augusta boldly.

"Hear me, and in silence," retorted Biron with a withering glance at the Countess; I was merely stating simple facts; no matter, I say on the strength of a stranger's assertions, every word of which might have been false for aught that you could know to the contrary, you at once branded the husband you have sworn to obey and cherish, as a swindler and an impostor! Epithets which should never be used but when supported by the most incontrovertible proofs and the most unimpeachable testimony. Now let me ask you whether I have not always told you that my father lived in the greatest seclusion, that he was a miser, and a man of most eccentric character? Say

did I or did I not tell you so—not once—but dozens of times ?”

“ You did,” said Augusta.

“ And that he lived under an assumed name ?”

“ I do not think — that is, I do not remember.”

“ No ? You do not remember ? But I *did* tell you so ; and I now tell you that that assumed name was Milford. Yes, learn now the fact, which my pride hitherto caused me to conceal—the fact, that in order to gratify the mean and grovelling passion of insatiable avarice with which he was afflicted, my wretched father sought, under a feigned name, in a miserable shop, to increase, by hoarding up its paltry profits, his already splendid fortune---that fortune which I have inherited and which alone is tolerably conclusive evidence that my father was not what he appeared to be to the world. But, Lady Wilsdown, I have papers---papers which have even recently been submitted to the inspection of the Russian Ambassador, you are at liberty to inspect them ;

“speak ! do you wish to do so ? Do you doubt my word ?”

“ No, no,” said Augusta trembling.

Then you are convinced that I am *not* an impostor, *not* a swindler ?” said Mesmer grandly ; and it was impossible to behold his dilating form and indignant features, and not acknowledge the nobility stamped upon every attitude and gesture he assumed.

“ Quite, quite,” said Augusta supporting herself by the back of a chair.

“ You may go, then !” continued the Count turning to Clara, upon whom he bent a look that fiends might have envied ; “ go, and may God forgive you as I do, for the injury you have attempted to do me. We meet no more ; for you and your child I shall provide, little as you deserve my generosity—no words.—be-gone !”

There was nothing threatening in the *tone* in which Mesmer uttered these words, and as his back was turned to her, Augusta could

not, of course, see the look by which they were accompanied.

Clara strove to speak ; her bosom heaved convulsively ; something seemed to rise and choke her ; in vain she endeavoured to give utterance to the feelings that shook her delicate frame by their violence — *that look*, by magnetic influence, paralysed her tongue ; she uttered a faint groan, and rushed from the room.

Biron waited until he heard the street door close, and then abruptly quitted the room, exclaiming—“ I shall come back directly”—in about five minutes he returned to Augusta, and said in a voice more in sorrow than in anger, to her ineffable relief, for she was trembling with fear of a violent scene, or what she still more dreaded, one of Mesmer’s quiet rages,* which by this time she understood to be far

* An hereditary malady on the paternal side.

more terrible than the most angry demonstration---

“ My dear Augusta, you were wrong to listen so readily to the assertions of this girl, with whom, some years ago, I formed, as I have said, a connexion long since broken off in every respect, but that which regards the maintenance of herself and child. She has behaved very badly, and abused both my confidence and my generosity. At the time we became acquainted I was glad to seek any refuge from the horrors of my position, and the vulgar associations by which I was surrounded ; besides you must be aware that I merely did what every man does before he is married. But I had never really, truly loved until I met you, to you my heart alone belongs ; and if of late there has been any slight estrangement, owing to my too great devotion to the arduous duties of political life, I sincerely regret that it should have been the case ; but I am taxing

myself beyond my strength, this excitement will bring on a return of the fever. Augusta, come kiss me ; let us forgive one another : I your jealousy and unjust suspicions---you, my past indiscretion and---”

Mesmer sank languidly upon a sofa, and pressed his hand to his breast as if suffering intense pain.

“ My dear Mesmer !” exclaimed Augusta flying to his side and throwing her arms round his neck, “ let us think no more of this wicked woman.

“ She is, I assure you, a most artful creature, and I was so young and inexperienced !”

“ I dare say, after all you were not so much to blame.”

“ Indeed I believe I was rather the seduced than the seducer.”

“ No doubt ! I wonder how I could credit all the nonsense she told me ! but you are in pain my love ?”

“ Yes—I fear the blows of that highwayman

have had a more serious effect upon my chest than I at first suspected—since I did not lose my snuff box.”

“Good heavens! let me send for medical advice instantly!”

“No, I have no faith in doctors; you saw how I got rid of Sir Henry; if I feel worse I will send for Prince Aurelius to mesmerise me.”

“Do let me send for him at once!”

“You seem very eager to send for Prince Aurelius.”

“No indeed, it was entirely on your account.”

“I think the Prince is rather particular in his attentions to you.”

“But consider he has known me ever since I was twelve years old.”

“If I remember, you spoke very enthusiastically of him before we were married?”

“So I do now, I admire his talents, his generous principles, the grace of his manners, and the charms of his conversation—surely

there is no harm in that, nor does it prevent me from loving you with my whole soul. But oh Mesmer! if you knew what pain your coldness has given me lately, how often I have sought my solitary chamber to weep bitter tears for the loss of your affection."

"My dear Augusta," said Mesmer, visibly affected, "pardon me, I was fool enough to be jealous of your friendship for Rosenberg—say you forgive me, dearest!"

"Then you love me still?" exclaimed Augusta, with unrestrained delight.

"Never, even for a moment have I ceased to love you my angel dear!" replied Biron, pressing her soft cheek to his own.

"Oh how happy that word makes me!"

"And me!" said Biron, at the moment with a feeling bordering upon sincerity. It was impossible not to be touched by such loveliness, and devotion as Augusta's. "But it will not do to lose sight of my object,"

thought he, suddenly checking the softer sensations to which he was yielding.

“Augusta,” continued Biron aloud, “I am compelled to revert once more to a disagreeable theme. Are you perfectly convinced of the truth of my explanation as to what that woman said, or do you wish to see the papers? If you feel the slightest doubt upon the subject, let me bring the proofs from my *escrutoire*, and at once decide the question?”

“My dear Mesmer, your word is sufficient, and it is cruel of you to refuse me forgiveness for the hasty words, which, taken as I was by surprise, and considering the circumstances. —”

“Enough,” said Lord Wilsdown, “we will say no more about it, but you will comprehend that it would be extremely unpleasant to me if these stories got noised about and talked of, you must therefore swear during my lifetime never to mention them to a single person.”

“I promise never to do so!”

“Swear!”

“Well I swear—you remind me of Hamlet as you look now,” added Augusta, playfully, the elasticity of her spirits beginning to return, and gazing on the handsome and delicately chiselled features of Mesmer, rendered still more interesting by his illness.

“But Mesmer!” she exclaimed, starting back at the frightful change in the expression of his countenance, which suddenly developed itself; “what is the matter, are you ill?”

“Yes, yes,” said Biron, hastily striving to recover his countenance, “my nerves are disordered by this *fracas*, I shall be better presently.” This was in fact the case, as otherwise the command which our adventurer possessed over his features was consummate. But some one had compared Biron with Hamlet, shortly after the death of Lord Granville, and for some reason or other Augusta’s innocent allusion to that Shakesperian hero, by reminding him of the malicious

remark, caused in him the most vivid emotion. However in a few minutes he recovered his composure, and resumed the subject of the oath.

“Swear most solemnly,” said Mesmer “that whatever may occur, whatever may happen even to our total separation or divorce—”

“Mesmer, do not speak so, you shock me.”

“I merely put the most extreme case—swear that in any event you will never reveal the facts with which you have to-day become acquainted.”

“I swear most solemnly to preserve eternal secrecy !”

“Enough,” said Biron, embracing Augusta, “we will never again speak of these matters, but hark ! there is a knock, are you at home ?”

“Yes, I said so—it is too late to countermand the order.”

“No matter love—I wonder who it is.”

“Prince Aurelius de Rosenberg,” said the footman.

CHAPTER VI.

THOUGHTS.

“I HOPE you are better Count?—my lord I should say, for I saw the history of your robbery and peerage in the same newspaper.”

“*Attempt* at robbery your highness means, for I had the best of the battle, though I was not aware of it until afterwards; they found me lying senseless by the side of the highwayman, whose face I had hammered most delightfully, with my riding whip. Having recovered

us both, they sent me home in a cab, and tried to take the robber to the station house, but he must be a most desperate ruffian, for notwithstanding the effects of the struggle, he managed to break from them, and escape; and I understand that from his face being so covered with blood, they are enabled to give but a very imperfect description of the rascal; so that in all probability he will escape getting his deserts for this once.—By the way what do people say of the affair?

“Oh! nothing is talked of but your extraordinary presence of mind, and bravery; you will be quite a hero in the salons henceforward. Fate seems to mark you out for hair-breadth escapes, and dangerous adventures.”

“I am afraid,” said Biron, “I am becoming a notorious character.”

“Notorious! your carriage will be pointed at by the *hoi polloi*, as you pass along, your popularity is prodigious; so much so that like the Egyptian king of old, I should recommend

you to throw a ring into the river as a libation to misfortune."

"The ring of Polycrates was returned to him if I remember," said Lord Wilsdown musingly.

"Yes, from the body of a sole I believe," said Aurelius, laughing.

"If mine were to be ever returned," said Mesmer, with an odd smile, "it would be from the soul of a body."

Neither the Prince nor Lady Wilsdown saw the precise drift of this play upon words, nor did Mesmer wish them to do so, for he instantly turned the conversation to other topics.

"Your highness has become terribly addicted to metaphysics lately I understand," said Biron.

"Yes," replied the Prince, "glad to see the dialogue turn upon his favorite subjects, yes I have been deep in Plato, Kant, and Hegel again ; as some French proverb, if I remember

rightly," says "*nous revenons a nos premiers amours*, we return to the loves of our youth."

"And what do you now think of your *premiers amours*?" said Augusta, smiling.

"I think they all, more or less, approached truth, but (excuse the truism) none of them grasped it; perhaps the Pythagoreans came nearer to the grand secret than any, but we know, unfortunately, so little of their doctrines!"

"For my part I think philosophy, (properly so called)," said Mesmer, "a very fruitless study; to discover unity in variety, the object I believe of all metaphysical enquiries, appears to me impossible according to our human natures, perhaps altogether but a sublime blunder.—Were I about to erect a temple to truth, I should write over the portal these words,"

"Infinite powers, infinite change, universal life, universal death—eternal reproduction!"

"I do not agree with you in the impossibility of the mind of man, penetrating even the

loftiest secrets of nature, but I have seen the vanity of endeavouring, physically to account for the phenomena by which we are surrounded," said Aurelius, and the necessity of turning the eye inwards rather than outwards in search of that divine mystery, which has baffled the profoundest thinkers of so many ages.

"The profoundest thinkers are easily baffled," said Mesmer, laughing, "for in a general way they dive so deeply in the gulf of hypothesis, that it is quite a wonder if they ever again rise to the surface. *Savoir vivre*, the art of making the best of every thing, is after all the most rational philosophy, and Epicurus was right to shrink from the scepticism of abstract meditation, and teach his disciples that which was, and always will be of the greatest importance to mankind, the art of being happy (although I differ slightly with him in his view of pleasure, and rather hold with the latter

offspring of his school) and the best road to enjoyment."

"Epicurus taught how to live, I would learn how to die," said Aurelius gloomily.

"Nothing can be more simple, derange the organic system, disturb the harmony of chemical combination, and the body is resolved into dust, the soul to air, galvanism, magnetic fluid, —whatever it may be."

"But were that the case, why these instincts, these presentiments of future states of being, this "longing after immortality," implanted in our minds, a faculty of the soul, entirely independent of that love of life and self preservation, so necessary to our corporeal safety. Show me any other innate faculty or desire leading to false results, and I will give up my point."

"The Socratic or Platonic mode of arguing from analogy is very illogical," said Biron, quietly, "perhaps you will say we have a faculty of comparison, but that is open to the

same objection ; however if I stay here any longer you will be trying to convert me, so I must be off.

When bishop Berkeley said there was no matter ;
It was no matter what he said.

To enjoy is to be wise, all the rest is uncertainty ; by the way I cured my fever by cold water, and talked magnetism to the physician, in order to get rid of him, but I must go and lay down now, or I shall have a relapse—pray stay where you are, Prince, and talk metaphysics to Augusta, she has grown as fond of them as yourself lately,” added Mesmer as he left the room with the shadow of a sneer in his voice.

Nothing could be more opportune ! thought he, and ringing the bell of his dressing room, he said in a significant tone to the footman who answered it—

“Let to day *be the day*—you understand, remember my instructions ; and the housemaid, is she within ?”

“Yes sir,” said the footman with something excessively resembling a confidential wink.

“Ah!” muttered Biron, as soon as the servant was gone, “wait till the deed is once done—and you will find yourself mistaken, if you imagine that you will be permitted any insolent familiarity — these wretches always presume upon one’s condescension, but upon my *honor*! it is most prodigiously apropos !”

CHAPTER VII.

EROS.

"I have called," said Aurelius to Augusta, when Biron had left them, "in order to bid you farewell."

"Farewell? Where then are you going---a trip to Baden Baden, or Paris, or do you contemplate revisiting your estates in Germany?"

"I may wander through many lands," re-

plied Aurelius, " but the places you have mentioned will scarcely be included in my plan ; I do not go to seek, but to avoid a crowd, and as for my native country, deprived as my family has been of its hereditary rights, and despoiled of its crown by diplomatic treachery, I feel little inclination again to enter it. "

" You are not a victim to the *Heim-Weh* then, like the rest of your countrymen ?"

" No ; I am a cosmopolite, and resemble." the dog rather than the cat in my attachments

" That is to say, you prefer people to places ?"

" Exactly so—to the wretched all places are alike."

" But you who are a philosopher ought not to be wretched," said Augusta, gently, looking in the face of the Prince with her soft, dark sapphire-like eyes.

"The true philosophy of life for *me* yet re-

mains to be discovered. Biron has found it---no wonder, he is yours !---but I---”

“ You too will find happiness in the love of some bright being a thousand times superior in mind and beauty to—”

“ Stay, that is profanation—yet I do not deny that there is that which consoles the lonely and bleeding spirit in the inspired pages of wisdom and poetry ; and there are moments when I doubt whether the visions of imagination are not grander and truer than the most laboured reasonings of the understanding ; but I must learn to bear the sufferings that cannot be cured ; nay, there are even tortures which the heart may cherish until they become a species of withering pleasure, woes, which were a god to offer us oblivion, we still should cling to as our costliest treasures !”

“ The Prince paused for a moment, and strove in vain to master the whirl of emotion which convulsed his whole being. Involuntarily he had clasped the little soft white hand

of Augusta in his own, and she, pitying the evident state of his feelings, did not attempt to withdraw it. At this moment protruded from between the folding doors a human head, adorned by a cap redundant in blue ribbands of a satin radiancy, that bordered on—on---*not* sublimity, but some very broad cast off lace of her generous mistress. This head appertained to the housemaid. It was a wonder that the corners of the lace on her cap did not grow into her eyes, as a just retribution for the perfidy and ingratitude she meditated.

“ But you will return?---we shall see you again?”

“ Never.”

“ But that is dreadful!” exclaimed Augusta, who, if she did not love the Prince as he desired, entertained for him the purest, most sincere, and sisterly friendship.

“ Shall you really regret my absence?”

“ Do we not always regret the absence of an old and dear friend!”

“ Ah! it is useless to stay and live in the increasing and fiery restlessness of pain! No, I must go far, far away,—on, on, like the eternal wanderer of the fable, and oh! Augusta, dear—dearest adored Augusta!—”

“ Hush! you must not speak thus, prince. I must leave you if you persist in doing so.”

“ No, Augusta, you may listen to me now--- now that I am about to fly to the remotest regions of the earth—to go, never to return; I may tell you the secrets of a heart which never yet shared its confidence with living man; I may tell—you tell you that I love you fondly, madly, hopelessly, and eternally love you.”

And Aurelius threw himself on his knees before the Countess and sobbed like a child in her lap. Where now was the pride, the dignity, the *philosophy* of the great, the talented, the honored de Rosenberg!

“ Your highness! I entreat,” began Augusta

unable to repress the tears of sympathy which the sufferings of Aurelius drew from her affectionate and sensitive nature ; but she strove in vain to assume the cold air of offended propriety suitable, or as the reader (if his morals be less immaculate than we charitably take them to be) may conceive *unsuitable* to the occasion.

“ No, it is in vain the intellect would reason with the passions, in vain we strive to persuade ourselves that the affections are the slaves of our understanding. Religious creeds, systems of logic, ethics, and metaphysics have passed away, like withered leaves before the winds of autumn, but *Love* is a god eternal, indestructible ; his power is as great to-day as at the dawn of creation ; his temple is in the human heart, and all mankind are his priesthood. Well might the most subtile imagination of modern poetry—well might the great Shelley call love the principle of the universe !”

“ Love is the destiny of man, it is the *arcanum* of his soul, and ever beneath the ponderous mountain of science, habit, and ambition, the giant passion paramount. Never can you conceive the agony, the struggle, it has cost me to resist this passion !

“ Augusta !” exclaimed Aurelius springing to his feet, and gazing upon her countenance with a wild despair which chilled her almost to faintness, “ I go—must it be alone ?”

“ Farewell ! do not act rashly ; we may yet be friends—but never, *never* more !”

“ Farewell ! I never believed in broken hearts till now ; we part for ever, one sister’s kiss, and Aurelius de Rosenberg exists for you no longer !”

Without another word Aurelius passionately pressed his lips to the forehead of Augusta, and departed with a rapid but firm step, and a composure which despair gave him nerve to command.

“ Ah, that Mesmer could love me like this man ! thought Augusta.”

“ Ah, that such an angel should be linked to one so little capable of appreciating her !” thought de Rosenberg, “ that he, the careless voluptuary, the man of dress and parties and polkas should be peaceful and blessed, whilst I, Aurelius, the student of every philosophy that ever was formed, to benefit my race—I, the searcher after truth, the lover of mankind, the curer of disease, the consoler of misfortune, go forth an exile and an outcast, to roam the ocean and the desert in search of that peace which the tomb alone can, lastingly, offer !”

“ What would have been thy feelings, O Aurelius, at that moment had the *whole* truth been then revealed to thee !”

But the car of time rolls on.

Neither the Prince nor Lady Wilsdown had remarked that a few minutes previous to the departure of the former, a footman had entered the room, and then, as if unwilling to disturb their conversation, retreated, unobserved, by the

same way he had entered, and subsequently remained upon the landing outside until after Aurelius's departure.

CHAPTER VIII.

MATERNITY.

MEANWHILE, Clara with slow and mournful pace pursued her homeward way ; for ever vanished her dearest hopes, she now felt all her love, all her earthly interest concentrated in her darling child, who, though sickly at first, had now become a remarkably healthy boy, whose face gave promise of a beauty little inferior to that of his unprincipled father, and in its chubby proportions formed a powerful

contrast to the pallid and sickly look of his mother's countenance.

When Clara reached home, the first thing she did was to inquire for her child.

"La ma'am ;" cried the servant, "I gave it to the person you sent for it, at least half an hour ago."

"What ! I sent no person !"

"Well, mum, he said he came from Mrs. Gordon, and that you was staying at a friend's, and—"

"Good God !" exclaimed the unfortunate young mother in an agony of distress, "and you gave this person the child ?"

"Yes ma'am—but pray don't take on so ; how *could* we know it was not all right---Oh, dear, dear !"

"Merciful powers ! it is a device of Alfred's, to punish me for the discoveries I made to his wife this morning !---but it is impossible---he cannot be so cruel as to deprive me of my child ; I will go to him at once, and

beg him to tell me where it is ; I will go down upon my knees ; I will never let him have any rest till he tells me. Oh, this is dreadful !---but it must be *he* who has taken away the child---it could be nobody else---and yet if it were ?”

The terrified mother instantly rushed from the house ; a cab offered itself opportunely.

“ Cab, mum ?” said the driver.

“ Yes, yes---quick !” exclaimed Clara.

“ Where to, mum ?”

“ Belgrave Square ; lose no time ; you shall be well paid.”

“ Greased lightning wouldn’t come up with me, as the Yankee doodles say,” retorted the cabman slamming the door of his vehicle ; and away they went.

At first Clara did not observe that the blinds were all up, nor on perceiving this fact, did she attach any importance to it, her mind was so completely engrossed by the one absorbing object. At length it occurred to her to look out

and see how far they had progressed ; accordingly she endeavoured to pull down the blinds, when to her astonishment she discovered that they were so securely fastened up by nails, as to defy all her efforts.

“ We ought to be there by now,” thought she after a time, “ it is very strange ; we seem to drive very fast, too.”

Again she endeavoured to loosen the blinds with equal ill success ; she then tried to attract the attention of the driver. In vain, he took not the slightest notice of her repeated taps and knocks. Of course she could not see that a man had mounted the box by the side of the driver, and that that man was no other than Sago, the honourable Count’s confidential valet and universal emissary. Equally little had she observed, in her hurry to enter the supposed cab, that it was, in fact, no cab at all, but a private Brougham of our friend Mesmer’s in which she was now being carried a prisoner, the devil, the Count, and Sago, his

valet, alone knew whither. Suddenly she heard a strange, whizzing sound, followed by a violent jerk, then all was still. Clara felt convinced that all was not right ; she screamed and knocked, and screamed again, to no purpose.

“ She is a mad lady,” said Sago, the valet ; and that, mechanically speaking, clenched the business, and effectually precluded all external interference.

They were on the railway, upon their way to Wilsdown Castle ; how can words describe the feelings of the poor girl, in an agony of impatient anxiety at the loss of her child, in utter darkness, ignorant as to where she was, or whither she was going. It seemed, in truth, like diabolical agency, the cold perspiration of fear burst from her forehead, and she sought in fervent prayer a refuge from the horrors that surrounded her.

Nothing could be more ingenious, and at the same time simple, than this scheme of Mes-

mer's. He calculated from his knowledge of her maternal feelings, and felt not even a momentary doubt of the success of the enterprise. The child gone—of course she would suspect him—of course her first idea would be to hasten back to his house—of course she would take the first cab that offered, *et voila tout !*

But this was a mere bagatelle, and having once set it going, our adventurer did not give it a second thought, unless it was to regret the inevitable day's absence of the trusty Sago, whose aid he especially required in the plots now rapidly hatching in the dark and voluminous recesses of his fertile and inventive intellect.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DENOUEMENT.

A FINE thing is the freedom of the press, and no doubt extremely useful in keeping down abuses, and giving people, wrong or right, political notions, without which it is true they would, in all probability, be much happier, but then happy ignorance is a stupid, clownish, Idyllic *Tityre-tu-patulæ* state of existence, and totally unworthy of an enlightened money-making, steam-exhaling, smoke-breathing, all-

work-and-no-play-enjoying country like the glorious land we live in. Newspapers too are fine things for shewing up rogues at the bar of public opinion, (decidedly the most unjust judge off the bench), pity that they so frequently damn the characters of the most virtuous individuals—by mistake.

But then you know they contradict it, the next day or the next week, when they discover their error?

Sometimes, but they do not always discover their error, and moreover errors are occasionally intentional, and then it is possible that one half the people who greedily devoured, and eagerly circulated *on the best authority*—what authority *can* be better than a newspaper?—the original calumny never chance to see or observe the contradiction, and so a few reputations are ruined. Not that we object to the freedom of the press ; were it assailed, we should be amongst its warmest supporters, as

it is not, we merely shew how the few suffer for the advantage of many.

Then again the liberty of the press is a fine check upon private morality, an excellent keeper of the conscience, of King, Lords, and Commons. So much so, that its penetration will discover your own, or your wife's evil deeds and lightest sins long before you yourself are aware of them, and by making them matters of universal notoriety, preclude the possibility of any such irregularities as reparation or forgiveness. Oh a glorious thing is the liberty of the press! out upon the dull cavillers who will tell you that the tyranny of public opinion is more complete and stringent than that of the most arbitrary despotism; the sceptre of newspaper editors, more heavy than the most ponderous cast iron rod of the unfettered autocrat! No, no, the liberty of the press is a priceless blessing, hurrah then my brave citizens for our homes, our taxes,

and our newspapers! into which when once a poor devil's name has entered, he hath indeed passed that infernal portal over which, as the Florentine tells us is inscribed,

“ *Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch'entrate.*”

“ When once the papers catch you—banish hope!”

The world—the Times, Chronicle, and Post-reading world—were electrified to read the hints of the shocking goings on of Lady W——n, and the unbecoming ornaments which had been added to the head of a certain Count de B—r—n, simultaneously with the coronet he had just obtained. They could not say more at present, but hoped to give *further particulars* to-morrow. Meanwhile common rumour was uncommonly busy, the scandalmongers were scandalized in the most delightful manner. Nothing could be more piquant, more mysterious, and more interesting. Jupiter! how the old maids, and ladies’

companions turned up their eyes! with what pious horror and ominous dignity they wagged the red peaks of their chins and noses,—“Well I declare!”—“did any body ever?” “how shocking”—“just what I expected, I told you so”—“how *very* disgraceful!”

“You have heard of course,” said the honorable Captain Somerton, to his friend Lord Friskerton, with whom he was taking a slight *dejeuner* “of the row at the Count de Biron, or rather Lord Wilsdown’s yesterday evening?”

“Not a word, what was it all about?” inquired Friskerton with interest.

“About!—why it is a most shocking affair—you remember what you were saying of Prince Aurelius, and the Countess, to me, the night of that unlucky masquerade?”

“I do, what then? I was mistaken.”

“You were *not* mistaken.”

“How?”

“You were quite right.”

“ Well don’t keep one in this vile state of suspense—what has happened?”

“ Prince Aurelius de Rosenberg,” replied Somerton speaking with solemn deliberation—to give weight and importance to his news, was caught in *flagrante delicto*, as the legal crew have it, with Augusta Lady Wilsdown, formerly Countess de Biron.

“ Damnation ! Somerton — do you really mean what you say ?”

“ There is no doubt of the fact she has left Biron’s house, and taken refuge with——”

“ The Prince ?”

“ No !—her parents.”

“ Ha ! that is strange, there seems yet to be a gleam of hope ; but explain the particulars as far as you have heard.”

“ Of course there is always a degree of uncertainty about these matters, and it is very difficult to get at the precise facts, but I had it on pretty good authority.—Biron’s man met

mine and told him all about it, he retailed to me as I was dressing this morning."

"*Canaille !*" muttered Friskerton.

"Well I tell you my source of information, that you may know what credit to attach to its truth. It seems that Biron, who is still suffering severely from that affair with the highwayman, had gone to bed, leaving the Prince alone with Lady Wilsdown."

"Pah ! it is horrible to reflect upon," exclaimed Friskerton, "her husband ill, suffering, and she—pah !"

"Just pass me a cotelette," said Somerton, who by no means felt his appetite spoilt by the infamies, as the French would say, "he was narraty" but if anything rather the reverse. as indeed, generally speaking, we are qualified by or, at the least, indifferent to the misdeeds of our acquaintance. With Friskerton it was different, he had known Augusta previous to her marriage, and entertained for her the great-

est esteem, besides Lord Wilsdown was, maugre his flirtation with the Duchess of Villersden, the Earl's most intimate and valued friend.

"Well," continued the Captain, "it seems Biron left his wife with the Prince, and that both by the housemaid and the footman was seen—

* * * *

"But how the devil could the housemaid or the footman enter the room without being observed? And how came they to do so?"

"The result of mere accident, the girl went into the adjoining room, which opens by folding doors into the drawing room to fetch something, or to do something, or dust something, or take ——"

"Never mind what she want there to do, but how came she to see or hear?"

“The folding doors were ajar---*voila tout !*”

“And the footman.”

“Entered the room with a message from the Count, but they were so buisily engaged—in conversation, that they did not perceive his presence, and he retreated unobserved and saw the rest through the key-hole.”

“Frailty, thy name is woman !” exclaimed Friskerton, “now do you know Somerton, I would have staked my fortune—nay my existence upon the eternal chastity of the Countess de Biron !”

“It is indeed too bad, the first year of their being married too !”

“Oh it is horrible ! and he in pain, sick from the effects of a murderous assault, I can scarcely grasp such unfeeling vice in one apparently so perfect a personification of innocence and purity itself.”

“It is surprising how the passions once excited, will subdue the most heroic virtue.”

“After all, women are weak miserable

creatures"—thank God! added Friskerton, bitterly, "that I am not, and never shall be a marrying man!"

At this moment a servant entered with a letter.

"It is from Lord Wilsdown," muttered Friskerton—"wishes to see me immediately—render him important services—anybody waiting for an answer?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Say I will be with his lordship in an hour."

"Very well, my lord."

"Here will be a duel!" exclaimed the Captain, when the menial had left them.

"I fear so," said Lord Friskerton.

"A duel between a German Prince, and an English peer—what a sensation it will produce!"

"I trust it may be avoided."

"Avoided!—to be sure, the seconds *are* punished almost as severely as the principals

now-a-days, you would have to cut and run to France, in case of a fatal termination. I had forgotten that."

"Pshaw!" replied Friskerton, "you fancy every one is as selfish as yourself!"

"Many a true word is spoken in jest," said the captain.

CHAPTER X.

VENGEANCE.

“ You see how it is,” said Mesmer concluding a narrative differing less in fact, than in greater minuteness of detail, from that contained in the preceding chapter, “ there is but one course to be taken.”

“ You have no reason to doubt the evidence of these servants ?” said Lord Friskerton.

“ Why, what earthly interest could they have to belie one who, however bad a wife, was always a most kind and excellent *mistress* ?—excuse the pun—it was accidental, I assure you,” added Biron with bitter sarcasm.

“ Lady Wilsdown denies everything ?”

“ Calls heaven and earth to witness her innocence, and the falsehood of the footman and housemaid, as a matter of course !” replied Biron in the same bitter tone.

“ Then you are determined upon fighting the Prince ?”

“ I am ; and upon shooting him dead, if he accepts my challenge !” rejoined Mesmer with a savage thirst for revenge in his manner, which, if not natural, was the *ne plus ultra* of successful dissimulation.

“ But calm yourself ; this excitement, considering your recent indisposition, may—”

“ No matter—I am quite well now—but

were I dying, my honor must be avenged ; you will not refuse me this favour."

" Well—no," rejoined Lord Friskerton who was the very soul of honour himself, " I am afraid it must be—I will go to the Prince this very afternoon—but there was something else you said you wished to ask me ?"

" Oh, a mere trifle—yet I hardly like to mention it—it may offend you ; I am about to ask you for that which frightens the ordinary run of men of this world, more than even a duel, which heaven knows in this land of freedom they are sufficiently alarmed at !"

" True ; foreigners would think us d—d cowards occasionally, if they saw the correspondences published in the daily, journals, in which one or both of the combatants seem to have but one object ; to back out of the fighting part of the business, with as little disgrace as may be. But what is it you were about

to ask me ; you know you may command me in everything ?”

“ Briefly, then, I require a loan.”

“ Is that all ?—I expected something that involved some risk or trouble at the least.”

“ This may involve both—the risk of never getting back the money, and the trouble of getting it.”

“ Nonsense---jesting apart, what is the sum you require ?”

“ Well, the fact is, that I have been living rather extravagantly, and was thinking of levying a mortgage on my Wilsdown estate ; but really I am so harassed with these domestic misfortunes, that it would be a great accommodation if, to save all trouble, you would lend me ten thousand pounds for a month or two. I will give you my bond of course.”

“ Certainly, certainly,” said Lord Friskerton, “ it shall be done, but---”

“The amount is larger than you anticipated, it will inconvenience you?”

“Not in the least, but I cannot let you have it until the day after to-morrow ; will that do ?” replied Friskerton, who was in reality at first a little staggered at the magnitude of the demand.

“Thank you my friend, you can imagine how hateful, at the present moment, any attention to business, especially pecuniary matters, must be ; from this you relieve me, and in a couple of months at the latest- -”

“Say no more about it ; you recollect our conversation on our way to Richmond ?”

“Yes, I remember,” replied Biron ; “I remember the *feeler* I tried on that occasion,” thought he to himself, with secret triumph at the success of his scheme.

“Well, I believe we then decided upon the value of pecuniary obligation, so restrain all expressions of thanks, until I can render you some real service.”

“ And that you can do, my dear Friskerton, by hastening at once to this detested Prince de Rosenberg, and appointing as early an hour as possible to-morrow morning, for our meeting.’

“ It shall be done---farewell for the present, I shall come at once to let you know the result of my interview with Prince Aurelius, and remember that you must be prepared to leave the country immediately, should you be unlucky enough mortally to wound de Rosenberg.”

“ You may well say *unlucky enough*---no, no, I have not practised daily for six months past, at the shooting gallery, for nothing. What is the punishment of death to that of life with a deficient or crippled limb? No, no, he shall not be *mortally* wounded!”

“ I do not like this vindictive ferocity,” thought Friskerton, “ it is painful to witness; I shall find you at home?” added he aloud.

“ You had better dine with me at six, if you are not better engaged.”

“ Pshaw ! every other engagement should be set aside on occasions like this, so *au revoir !*”

CHAPTER XI.

SCENES !

THE two friends ate and drank in gloomy silence, until the removal of the cloth freed them from the presence of the servants, when Mesmer, having filled his glass with some matchless *Sauterne*, and passed the bottle to Lord Friskerton, said in a tone of angry disappointment---

“ And so he is resolved not to fight ?”

“ His determination is immutable ; he asserts most vehemently, and confirms by the most solemn oaths, the innocence of both Lady Wilsdown and himself, although he owns that circumstances might appear against them.”

“ Circumstances appear against them ! Oh, yes, the guiltless lambs ! why had they been found * * * they would have asserted their innocence, and *circumstances* would have been against them !”

“ But indeed, Biron, if ever face bore the impress of sincerity, it was de Rosenberg’s, and I cannot help imagining that the servants may have exaggerated, or even—”

“ Good heavens !” continued Mesmer as if unconscious of Friskerton’s last words, “ such unprincipled baseness, such mean and cowardly falsehood in one of royal race is fearfully contemptible !”

At this moment a loud knock at the door was heard, after some time, followed by strug-

gling in the hall. The door was thrown violently open, and a tall figure, muffled in a cloak entered, followed by a footman with a deranged neckcloth.

“ I thought I told you to admit no one ?” said Biron fiercely.

“ My lord, this person insisted upon seeing you, and forced his way in, in spite of all my resistance.”

“ You can go,” said the stranger to the servant in a tone of stern and lofty command, which the menial scarcely hesitated to obey.

“ Yes, go,” said Biron, suddenly reflecting that whoever the stranger might be, it was just possible that he had something to communicate, which it would be as well for the footman to remain in ignorance of.”

“ And now, sir, pray inform me of the reason of this unseasonable intrusion, and also with whom I have the honour of speaking ?” said Mesmer grandly.

The stranger calmly removed his hat, threw back his cloak, and discovered—Aurelius.

“ You !” exclaimed Biron fiercely, “ you ! and what means this boldness, this additional, and unnecessary insult ? Coward ! though weak from recent illness and agitation, I may yet have strength to inflict that chastisement you deserve, since you refuse me the just satisfaction I requested ! and Mesmer rose, and would have rushed upon the Prince, had not Lord Friskerton laid his hand upon his shoulder, and, whilst endeavouring to restrain him, said emphatically—

“ Hear what his highness has to say ; it is but just, and do not degrade yourself by personal violence, I entreat !”

“ Speak, then,” said Biron with a sudden calmness that at another time would have excited surprise, “ why, after doing me the most deadly wrong that one man can inflict upon another, do you again venture beneath my roof ?”

“Had I, indeed, so basely violated your hospitality,” replied Aurelius, who had maintained a dignified and unmoved posture during Lord Wilsdown’s outbreak, “I should not be here, nor, however repugnant the whole system of duelling may be to my moral convictions, should I have refused to give you the satisfaction to which you would have been entitled.”

“Indeed?” said Mesmer with a withering sneer.

“You sneer, my lord,” said Aurelius, with difficulty restraining his passion, “but the time may come when you will be called to account for the title of coward you dared but now to brand me with. I make allowance for your excited feelings.”

“I humbly thank your highness,” rejoined Biron with icy scorn, and a bow of satirical politeness.

“Do not imagine,” resumed Aurelius, by a tremendous effort preserving his external calmness of demeanour, “that I have come

from any personal motive to this accursed mansion, but justice, honour, and love, ay, *love*, demand that I should at least attempt, by a plain statement of the truth, to exculpate her who has been partly, through my folly, so fearfully a sufferer."

"*Love* demands it?" said Biron in the same tone of chilling sarcasm, "ha—ha—ha! your candour at any rate does your highness credit!" and to keep up the farce, the Impostor commenced slowly tearing to shreds the napkin he held in his hand.

"Listen my lord," continued Aurelius sternly, with a truthfulness in his voice that compelled Friskerton to waver in his belief of his guilt; "you have been basely and infamously deceived."

"Prove it!" said Mesmer with cutting coldness.

"Surely!" exclaimed the Prince with a burst of generous indignation, "*some* weight is to be ascribed to the word, the truth of a

man—a noble—a prince—whose name was never before tainted by the breath of dishonor. Tell me one oath more solemn, more sacred than another, and I will swear by it to the innocence of Augusta and myself.” The Prince stopped—he could not help blushing at having unconsciously made use of the familiarity of the christian name of Lady Wilsdown.

Mesmer exchanged a rapid but significant glance with Lord Friskerton.

“Whatever torture it may be,” resumed Aurelius “in the hope that the light of truth must and will shine through and scatter the baneful mists of falsehood by which your mind and understanding are at this moment obscured, I will confess the dearest secrets of my heart, and expose the inmost recesses of my soul to the view of hostile and scornful eyes; but beware how you tempt me with outward marks of disbelief;” and there was a noble pride, a sublimity in the expression and attitude of the Prince’s towering form

which had awed any man less desperately wicked than the impostor, whose soul, steeped in crime, deceit, and hypocrisy, was utterly impregnable to the influence of the loftiest virtue. With a smile of derision, he listened to the words of Aurelius.

“ I loved her,” began de Rosenberg, “ I love her still—*how*, it is not for me here to tell!--but I should have regarded myself as the vilest refuse of creation, had I entertained a dishonorable thought towards your peace. I could bear no longer the torments of a passion unreturned, and determined upon leaving this country for ever; I came to bid farewell to all that could have rendered earth endurable, and—” here the Prince gave a vivid and animated account of every circumstance and word, to the most minute particulars which his memory could furnish, that had taken place during his last interview with Augusta.

“ That is *your* story,” said Biron with un-

moved composure, “ now, two credible, and what is more, *disinterested* witnesses tell the tale somewhat differently.”

“ Yes, two servants who probably nourish some paltry spite against their lady.”

“ Lady Wilsdown told me of nothing of the kind, and as for their being servants, the testimony of one human being is as good as another.”

“ That I deny—but let me be confronted with these lying wretches, let me see if they can bear my look without blenching, and repeat their miserable inventions without prevarication.”

“ Let it be so, then,” said Mesmer after a moment’s reflection, during which he arrived at the conclusion that there would be no danger in the experiment, “ and believe me, I should be but too happy were they proved to be liars and slanderers ; but mind, no intimidation, no threats ; cross-examine them as

much as it pleases you ; in the hands of Lord Friskerton I place my honor ; let him decide whether or no their veracity remains unshaken by your questions.”

So saying, Biron rang the bell, and ordered the footman and the housemaid to be sent up to them.

They came. With the keenness of a Wylde or a Kelly, Aurelius questioned them. In vain were all his attempts to cause them to contradict one another. So well were they drilled, so ingeniously was the false interwoven with the true, that at length the Prince gave up the attempt in despair, exclaiming passionately, “oh that by the sacrifice of my life I could establish her innocence !”

“I wish you could,” said Mesmer grimly, “but you will not fight—and yet you appear to acknowledge almost every fact asserted by these witnesses, except the——”

“Except the only fact of any real importance !” interrupted Aurelius bitterly —does no

remembrance of your past friendship weigh in my favor? you surely do not suspect me of attempting to shield myself from your resentment by a cowardly or contemptible perjury?"

"No, candidly, Prince," replied Mesmer, sternly, "I am convinced *now* that but one motive could prompt you to such unheard of audacity of falsehood, if that it be a falsehood, the sincerity and violence of your accursed passion; I acquit you of cowardice provided—but it is for lord Friskerton to decide whether you have succeeded in invalidating the testimony of these two persons."

"Your highness! deeply as my feelings are affected by all you have said, however my heart may incline to believe what you have stated, I cannot conscientiously see any reason to discredit the evidence of the servants, or to justify my friend in acknowledging the innocence of Lady Wilsdown. To a man of honour like yourself, I feel that to lie, to perjure yourself, to save the woman you loved, would

be an act of the most devoted heroism, for had you a thousand lives, their sacrifice I am convinced would cost you infinitely less pain !”

“ Oh God !” exclaimed de Rosenberg, struck with horror and amazement, at this new and unfortunate view of the case taken by the Earl, “ no,” he continued after a pause during which he pressed his hand to his forehead, as if to check the incipient confusion of his intellect. “ I doubt, whether to save the woman I loved from the torments of the rack, of hell itself, were there in existence such a place, I could act as you imagine—but I do not accuse you of injustice, unfortunate circumstance, the lies of these wretches—I will inquire, I will—miserable reptiles !” he exclaimed abruptly turning to the two servants, who trembled beneath the basiliskine fierceness of his look—“ recant, before it is too late, or——

“ I will have no intimidation—go, you have destroyed my peace, be content, let the law decide the rest.”

“You will go to law?---O, heaven! to what horrors has my folly given up this pure, this angelic victim!”

“Think you, I will bear my wrongs in weeping patience,” said Mesmer, “or live even in name united to——

“Stay, no blasphemy! hell burns within my soul---I shall go mad”---here Aurelius turned once more to the two quaking and perjured menials who would have slunk from the room but that his standing before the door cut off their escape, “The time *will* come!” he thundered, and with a gesture of despair, rushed once more from the house, which for the last time he had entered.

He hastened to the Merlmore’s, he repeated there his asseverations of his own and Augusta’s innocence, they were readily believed; he threw himself at the feet of Augusta, and besought her to fly with him to the Continent; guiltless as she was, there was not a ray of hope that her character could be saved, her

honor was lied away, but not the less lost—had she yielded, would she have been to blame, or the monster who so remorselessly sacrificed her? Alas! few know how many parallel cases are constantly occurring! how often poor defenceless woman is immolated at the shrine of man's dark selfishness!

Oh, sadly is the chivalry of old degenerated! that so few are found to rise in their defence. Shall I, who am a man—and I assert my manhood because certain long-sighted critics have discovered, in the soft effeminacy of my style, in a former work, incontrovertible evidence to the contrary—shall I then be silent? no glorious Eugene Sue! you are not the only Quixote of these unpoetical times; from England's misty shores, I faintly echo back the noble, though unpalatable, truths, you utter with such boldness and such energy!

The days of the lance and the sword are past, it is true, and we regret them not, although the boiling blood of youth once

pictured them in such delightful colors, and in the days of student devil-may-careism, we remember with a laugh the fierce challenge, originating in a young lady's shoe string! Such days are gone, and happily, but for the Quixotes (and Quixote *was* a hero) of the modern age, exists a longer lance, a more trenchant sword, one that extends from continent to continent, and pierces the remotest recesses of the earth, the pen, "kind nature's noblest gift—the grey goose quill!" at whose back whole armies rise of fearless partizans, of indefatigable warriors, regiments of clearly printed volumes, each in itself a host—an orator secure of a numerous audience, who never can turn their coats or with the inconsistency of faction contradict one another's assertions, but fight to the last drop of their ink, to the last cotton thread that *unites* their *pages* for the principles they so unswervingly advocate!

To return to Augusta we repeat that *had* she yielded to the passionate solicitations of Aurelius, though blameable, she could scarcely have been condemned, but she did *not* yield.

“No Prince,” she exclaimed, “however I may be revolted at the conduct of Lord Wilsdown, for I cannot resist the suspicion that he but too well knows the falsehood of his accusation, and were I not bound to the most solemn secrecy, could disclose that which would at least justify my suspicion. I am resolved, whilst legally his wife, to preserve, at least, the consciousness of virtue—hereafter——”

“Oh, Augusta!” exclaimed the Prince, “then you no longer love this --- monster, as he must be, if there is but the shadow of truth in your supposition?”

“Love him!” exclaimed Augusta, “no! that one scene of cold, un pitying insult has obliterated for ever all that I ever felt of

affection towards him. Love him!-- words cannot express my loathing, my deadly abhorrence!"

Aurelius scarcely recognised the gentle and patient Augusta, as she uttered these startling sentiments. Unable to conceal his joy, he seized her hand, and covering it with kisses, said in an almost inaudible voice, "do you--- can you---do you think that you can love me me---but a little?"

She did not reply. Aurelius rose, he clasped her in his arms, impressed one daring kiss upon her rosy lips, and whispered in her ear whilst her cast down eyes and blushing cheeks seemed to confirm the assertion---we may yet be happy!

CHAPTER XII.

THE TRIAL.

THE action against Prince Aurelius 'Wilsdown, versus Rosenberg'—at length came on. The damages were laid at twenty thousand pounds, and the first counsel retained on both sides. The court was crowded to suffocation, and the newspaper reporters, (all the weekly journals having sent a special short-handwriter for the occasion) stood upon one another's heads

three deep—or would have done so, if they could; the numbers of solicitors demanding admittance in virtue of their office, was increased to an unparallelled extent, and junior barristers, who never had taken a fee in their lives, made comparative fortunes by the loan of their wigs and gowns for the occasion; nay it is even affirmed that all the judges kept wide awake during the whole course of the trial, and that the usher was only heard to disturb the court three times, by calling out “silence!” from the opening speech of the plaintiff’s junior, to the final decision of the judges being dictated to the jury.

Fifty witnesses were examined for the plaintiff, and eleven, on behalf of the defendant, were duly bullied by the opposing sergeant, with the most satisfactory results; we are not about to give a lengthened detail of the trial, but cannot refrain from presenting the reader with an authentic specimen or two of the way in which witnesses are occasionally

used, or rather abused, in the courts of justice, of the most free and enlightened country of the world. If we are accused of exaggeration, we can only recommend the reader to take an occasional stroll into the courts at Westminster, and *probatum erat*. Now be it remembered that a witness is presumed to be a perfectly innocent and disinterested person, summoned to aid the ends of justice by testifying to certain facts, with which he is acquainted, and under such circumstances merits protection, and politeness at the least. (If every body had their deserts!) but the the most absurd part of the matter is the altogether irrevelant queries constantly put by the barristers, frequently about as germane to the point, really in question, as that popular enquiry we have all of us heard in the streets of London, from the lips of the vulgar, relative to the knowledge of a man's nearest female relative, of his absence from home, or the insinuation to a passer by that he walketh along with his eye out, or that his horse hath had the

misfortune to drop that ornamental spinal continuation, vernacularly denominated his tail, in favour of which, as in the celebrated case of the noses of the prophets, popular prejudice is supposed to run.

“And so you never saw the Countess de Biron *late in the evening*, at your master’s house?” said Sergeant Rawbite, grimly, to a female servant of the Prince’s, who, like all the rest of the witnesses but two, had been summoned by Mesmer’s orders, more for show than actual use.

“I never saw the——”

“Never mind what you never saw -- did you or did you not see the Countess at your master’s house late in the evening of last Friday ”

“No sir!” said the witness, frightened and brow-beaten by the savage manner of the lawyer.”

“*Not* late in the evening?”

“No sir!”

“That if not on *Friday*—it was on Thursday then?”

“No sir!”

“Oh, not *late in the evening* on Thursday—and pray how often did the countess make these morning calls you mentioned?”

“I did not mention——”

“Can you not reply to a straightforward question—I repeat *how often*?”

“Never, sir—never at all!”

“Remember that you are upon your oath—*how often* do you say?”

“I did not---I---”

“Your father was transported for forgery I believe?”

“My father transported——”

“For forgery, was he not? you are upon oath remember?”

“No---sir---never!”

“What! is not his name D——?”

“Yes sir!”

“ Well, and do you mean to say—he is now in England ?”

“ No sir, he is——”

“ In Australia ? now take care what you say.”

“ Yes sir---but---” stammered the girl.

“ And so you did not take the key of the garden door in a note to the Countess de Biron ?”

“ Yes sir, but my father——”

“ Never mind your father,” said the lawyer, gruffly, well knowing that he had *settled* at Swan river, whilst by his (Rawbite’s) ingenious questions and abrupt interruptions, he left a firm impression on the minds of the jury that the man was a convict, a fact which could not fail to throw suspicion upon her integrity.

“ And so you did not take a note from the Prince de Rosenberg ?”

“ Yes, I took a note, but——”

“ Oh ! you *did* take a note then, and pray was there nothing in that note.”

“Yes sir, but it was not——”

“Never mind what it was *not*, we want to know what it *was*?”

“It was something hard and round, I think ——”

“What business have you to think? hard and round you say?”

“Yes sir, I——”

“The ring of this key is hard and round gentlemen,” said the learned sergeant, producing a large key, “and this key I shall prove, by the next witness, was found in the Countess’s bed room, the morning after her departure.”

The truth was that Sago, the valet, had filched the key from the door it pertained to, and Biron had himself placed it in his wife’s chamber.

So saying Sergeant Rawbite sat down with an air of triumph, and left the poor witness to be cross-examined by his antagonist, but what could even the ingenuity of the great Grinder-

son do with facts purely imaginary, he could but make the witness do what she had done already---deny the facts, and state the simple truth, regarding the letter, and her conviction that it contained a coin or something of the kind.

“A very likely thing,” as Rawbite remarked with a sneer, “that the Prince would enclose money---perhaps a sovereign or a half crown to the Countess!”

“True---a small cameo was produced as the thing in question with the letter mentioning the fact--but then there was no witness of the Prince's having placed it in the letter, even if the Countess received it; ‘it looked like an after thought,’ as Rawbite again observed, and when one of Biron's servants swore, and truly, to finding the key in the bedroom of her mistress, not a doubt remained upon the minds of the jury, on that point at least.

The evidence of Sago, the footman, and the other housemaid put a finishing stroke to

the case, and a verdict, despite all Grindersons eloquence, in favour of the defendant (of whose guilt, he in his heart, if lawyers *have* hearts, entertained not the slightest doubt)---a verdict we say was forthwith given in favour of our hero with *ten thousand pounds damages*, carrying costs, and putting him in a position to sue immediately for a divorce in the ecclesiastical court, a course he did not fail to adopt with the utmost possible expedition.

“And then for the Villersden!” muttered Biron --- married to a duchess, and the most beautiful woman in London, “I think I shall do---perhaps be a duke myself one of these days!”

But Mesmer’s passion for the duchess did not prevent him from indulging in the most extravagant voluptuousness; accordingly the reader must not be surprised to hear his address to his valet.

“Sago said he is the little Neldoni safe, at Wilsdown, by this time?”

“Yes my lord!”

“Then order the carriage.”

“Yes my lord!”

“To the railway!” cried Mesmer, as he threw himself into his barouche. “By Jove! it was most splendidly managed---but after all I hate lawyers, they are a dry, dusty, musty, vulgar set of people, and the sight of their wigs---the judge’s in particular—is, anything but refreshing to to the eye of one who knows and understands the principles of the truly beautiful---it will be indeed a relief to see this graceful brunette of a Neapolitan perform one of her pas de fascinations---*Tonnerre de Dieu!* as one of those cursed Frenchmen said at the gambling house, the change is delightful, I shall positively melt away in rapture!”

CHAPTER XIII.

INFORMATION.

“ FIVE ? Mr. Monville, did you say *five* ? ”

“ Five—at the very least ! ” replied the attorney.

“ He is a pretty villain ! ” muttered Merlmore, at whose house the conversation, now recording, took place, shortly after the trial of Wilsdown *versus* Rosenberg.

“ He *is*, ” replied Monville, “ and knowing something more of him than the world in

general, I have come to you, notwithstanding the, I must say, very unceremonious way, in which I was treated."

"I am really much obliged to you, and can assure you that had I not been prejudiced against you by the Count—But you shall conduct my daughter's cause if you think there is any chance?"

"No doubt there is a chance; time must bring out the truth; if these servants have perjured themselves—"

"*If*," said Merlmore with a frown.

"Excuse me," said the lawyer, hastily amending his mistake, "I am merely putting the case---*if*, if they have perjured themselves, as of course they have, there is yet hope; but I will see what can be done regarding them, and let you know in a day or two, meanwhile we ought to collect all the evidence we can as to Lord Wilsdown's conduct and doings."

"Ah! and touching these five women you spoke of?"

“ Yes, they are all down at Wilsdown, and my informant tells me that the quantities of wine, ice, and delicacies of every kind sent down are prodigious, considering that nobody is presumed to be staying there but Lord Wilsdown ; a little time ago he had a magnificent self-playing organ brought there worth, it is said, above five thousand pounds !”

“ And nobody is admitted, you say.”

“ Nobody ; he is always out, when they call, and indeed, of late no one has attempted to visit him, it being pretty well understood in the county, that he is keeping a regular harem at the Castle.”

“ He must be prodigiously rich, or prodigiously near to ruin !” said Merlmore, who could scarcely help regretting that things had not run smoothly with so wealthy a son-in-law.

“ More likely the latter ; I could almost swear that I met him in disguise at a gambling house, in Paris, less than a year ago.”

“Impossible—excepting on a trip to Devonshire, to look at an estate, I do not think he left town for three days together ; besides, why should he gamble in disguise ?”

“ I cannot tell, but certainly the person I saw at ----’s *was* in disguise, and *was*, in feature and height, the *fac simile* of the Count ; the eyes were the same, although he wore spectacles, and even the moustache was the same shape, only colored grey ; he wore a wig, and as I said at the time, if it was not de Biron, it was the devil !”

“ Very likely ; but romantic as it would be, you must have been mistaken ; for setting aside the improbability of a man like the Count undertaking such a freak---especially at such a time---”

“ But remember he won above twenty thousand pounds.”

“ Well, setting all that aside, *when* could he have gone to Paris, considering that he never left London ?”

“ You say he went to Devonshire ?”

“ Ah ! true ; but what then ?”

“ Perhaps it was a *ruse*, and he went to Paris instead.”

“ But why should he go, at such a time especially ?”

“ To win money to perform a secret swindle, perhaps ; but I confess that there is a mystery about the whole affair which does, and always will, puzzle me ; but I must narrate the circumstance to you ; perhaps you may be able to throw some light upon the subject.”

“ Well,” said Monville, when he had finished the story of the hell adventure, “ what do you think of it, presuming the one player to have been the Count de Biron, who do you imagine was the other ?”

“ I have no idea ; it was very odd, certainly ; but likenesses are common.”

“ Yet there are few men like Lord Wilsdown ; have you ever yourself met anybody resembling him ?”

“ No, I must confess I have not ; but even if it were Biron, I fear it is not a fact that would assist our cause materially.”

“ No, no ; but it is strange how that meeting has occupied my mind ever since ; I would give almost any sum to fathom the secret ; to revert, however, to the harem at Wilsdown, I will send a faithful embassy to collect evidence, and do not doubt of ultimate success, meanwhile my name must not on any account appear in any of the proceedings.”

“ For what reason ?”

“ Because Lord Wilsdown is as vindictive as he is unscrupulous, and would not fail to contrive against me some serious injury.”

“ Well, be that as you like, we are much obliged to you for your information.”

“ I hope soon to obtain more. Good morning.”

And Mr. Monville departed.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PRISONER.

THE sunset dyed the distant hills with golden radiance, light purple clouds edged with celestial brightness, like fair Utopias of the sky, swam gently across the blue expanse of the firmament, the trees waved gently, whispering in the breeze, and the murmur of distant fountains fell cool upon the ear, as Mesmer reclined upon the grassy slope, descending from

the terrace at Wilsdown—that terrace, upon which so recently, in all her innocence of girlish love, Augusta had leant upon his arm, and dreamed with fond enthusiasm of bliss, ceaseless and unchanging.

Surrounded by flowers, whose perfume filled the air, Lord Wilsdown struck occasional chords upon a beautiful guitar, inlaid with silver and mother of pearl, the soft clear notes of which, under his masterly touch, vibrated with all the vigour of the finest harp. A Greek cap, of scarlet cloth, confined his dark brown curls; with the exception of his coat, he was entirely habited in white, and his open collar, and embroidered Turkish slippers, gave to his *tout en semble* an appearance at once *négligé* and picturesque. To a melody of the most varied beauty, now deeply pathetic, now thrilling with wild emotion, he sang the following improvisation---

“The spirit of my hero sire---came whispering in the mighty wind---awake, arise, be bold,

be great---mighty gifts from these lurk in the womb of time !”

“With soul of flame and tiger heart---I left the scrolls of bye-gone days, the wisdom of old, and the lore of my age, farewell ye silent comrades, lone friends of my unfriended youth !

“I went forth to the haunts of men—the magnates of the land before my spirit bowed—deluded fools ! with secret scorn I viewed their gestures vain.—I made my will my God.—I wished and I obtained !

“Who came to the lone student, to offer him aid on the road to fame, who cared if he lived, or died, consumed by his own genius !

“I plunged in crime, until the fiends, if such there were, had felt a pride in my companionship ; no idle scruples, childish doubts, no villany by halves, or pangs of vain remorse, restrained my upward flight, as eagle-like I soared !

“Robber, and saint alike, I robbed; guilty and innocent alike destroyed—warriors have conquered nations, but I have conquered souls,---if I have waded on through mingled streams of blood, and tears, they found in seas of briny gore, a grave---and deathless glory !

“ And even *I* have dreamed of better things, of bright philanthropy, and self sacrifice, of virtue pure, and boundless charity, of happiness and never fading love !

“And shall I then repent?—ha—ha ! repent ! will the waves render up their dead, the earth restore its skeletons ?

“Amid the worshippers of dross, of foul self-interest, ill understood, I dwell, and see them daily immolate their fellows on the wretched shrine of their poor egotism.

“And I, if for my pleasure I have whirled a few of these poor knaves to swift destruction, it is that, in my eyes, they are not worthy to live the life, they know not to enjoy.

“O, life ! with all the sufferings, pains, monsters, meannesses, that dwell with men, how beautiful art thou, how full of keen delights !

“How glorious is nature ! even to gaze whilst thus reclining on yon azure dome, gives strange, mysterious pleasure, these flowery scents, this soft green turf, yon placid lake, in which the sunset mirrors the waving trees beyond, all calm the soul with deep voluptuous tranquillity.

“And why was not I — why are not all men born to this — why should toil, want, temptation, pain, exist, with deeds forbidden, and corroding care ? Why not have made all things bright, beautiful and happy, why not have gifted man with health and life, and beauty never fading, with sense of pleasure inexhaustible ?”

Propound these queries to the orthodox, and what have they to offer in reply ? They tell you 'tis presumption to enquire — all for the best — beyond man's comprehension — they call it impious for finite beings to judge the infinite,

and prate whole volumes of antiquated cant and bedlam reasonings! as if Omnipotence feared human scrutiny.

“ Well,” continued Biron, who had, for some time ceased to agitate the strings of his guitar, “ I am, at any rate, wiser than Socrates; he knew that he could know nothing, I know that I can *feel* much, life is worth enjoying after all!

“ But O, woman, woman! why does possession bring indifference? why is the passionate longings of the soul ever unappeased? why this eternal thirst for pleasures still more keen, sensations still more rapturous?

“ Why Augusta, lovely as thou wert, and art, could not my love survive one brief and fleeting year?—alas! it is that for me there is no dwelling in the hearts of my race, no sympathy with the beings on which I prey; I share not their belief, their cares, their prejudices; no matter whether in the crowded ball room or the nightly forest, even alone the restless spirit

works within itself, victim of a consuming and eternal egotism !

For some time Mesmer remained absorbed in dark meditations, his eyes fixed vacantly upon the blue hills in the distance. A light step roused him from his dismal reveries, in which indeed he was not often disposed to indulge, nor were his fits of melancholy even of prolonged duration, for reversing the saying of the Roman, he considered ‘to be miserable weak,’ and like adjutant Green, ‘acted accordingly.’

“You look dull, mi lord, what you call mopish—down in de mouse?” said a voice in soft Italian accents, and a slight graceful figure appeared on the terrace, whose fresh and youthfully voluptuous proportions were well displayed by a bodice laced down the front, in most bewitching style, as though the rounded charms, thereby concealed, longed to burst forth from their black satin thralldom, and skirts of white muslin, so spiritual and cloud-

like that the fairy outline of her shape shone through them like some operatic dream, or one of Plato's shadowy reminiscences of ante-natal life, when like a cork upon the sea, our souls bobbed up and down in azure waves, catching occasional glimpses of—God knows what---but something nice of course---heaven, the true, the beautiful and other ideal matters; but I write at random, my bad memory does not permit me to particularize, and I have lent my copy of the dialogues to a friend.

En passant as I have alluded to the great Academician, I cannot refrain from hinting to such of my readers, as are of a literary and philosophical turn, how great a service they would render to the English reading world, by the production of a complete and readable translation of all Plato's works. The uncouth and literal one by Taylor, however ill adapted to general perusal, would greatly lighten the labour. We read and hear constant complaints that people quote, and talk of Socrates's illus-

trious pupil, without having read even one syllable of his work, and this is easily accounted for by the fact that not one man in a hundred who goes to Oxford or Cambridge, and is presumed to be a good classical scholar, can manage Plato, in the original language, with even moderate facility, and heaven knows that metaphysical and ethical subjects require no additional obstructions to their comprehension. Reading, lexicon in hand, tries the patience of the most ardent neophyte—besides there are the ladies, who, more especially require a correct definition of the so much talked of, scoffed at, and misrepresented Platonic love. It is no use asking the pedants, they can read Greek it is true, but they cannot understand Plato. One thing is clear, that the philosopher meant to describe friendship in its purest and most elevating form, nor, in my humble opinion, is this by any means incompatible with the tender passions; however, time and space will not admit of a prolonged discussion upon the

subject in this volume. Meanwhile my fair friend Superficia, thou who hast quoted the unseen and discoursed of the unknown, permit me to refer you to Shelley's essays as a prescription for your disease, and if you *should* know any young gentleman addicted to dragging the Grecian sage his arguments, like Faust and Mephistopheles, when swearing to the decease of Martha's husband, '*ohne viel zu wissen,*' recommend him a *second* perusal of 'The Gorgias.'

To return to the young lady on the terrace, La Signora Neldoni, for she it was, was a charming brunette of one or two and twenty springs, with the dark hair and large black melting eyes of her country, and a skin of that clear brown tint, which Prince Puckler Muscau,* no mean judge of beauty, candidly prefers to the pale loveliness of more northern climes;

* See his Egypt and Mehemet Ali.

and I must confess I am inclined to agree with his highness's taste, though of course his purchase of the pretty Abyssinian as a companion in his tour up the Nile, is perfectly shocking to our English notions of propriety, and that careful regard for *appearances* (*c'est tout*) universally evinced by our proverbially moral nation.

No, I do not hesitate to assert that if—supposing that such an improbable thing *could* take place—if Lord So-and-so *had* bought a pretty slave *pour passer le tems*, during an Egyptian excursion, up the river, of unknown sources, he would never—no never have said anything about it in his journal!

“Giulietta!” exclaimed the Count—we still call him so from habit---“stay where you are, and I will sing you a serenade.”

So saying Biron sprang to his feet, and at once shaking off the black vapours which had clustered round his brain, sang with a clear

melodious voice, and ‘a laughing devil in his eye,’ an air from the opera of “Roméo é Julietta,” in a way that on the stage, if people of fashion had any nature left in them, would have brought down thunders of applause.

Talk of music having charms to soothe a *savage* breast---of course it has, who should be more susceptible of the pure sense of the beautiful, than an uncivilized cannibal---but let it soothe a dandy’s self importance, behold a starched and lorgnette wearing coxcomb, gradually relaxing into an attitude bordering upon the graceful, the vulgarity of the artificial imperceptibly, verging into the dignified simplicity of the natural—*that* is the real triumph of music !

Throwing aside his guitar, and shaking back the long hair which fell so picturesquely beneath his cap of scarlet, Mesmer threw his arm round the waist of Julietta, and before she was aware of his object, was whirling her along in a *valse du diable* down the lawn, lifting

at every turn her slight and gracile figure completely from the ground, until panting and half frightened she found herself on the margin of the lake, with Lord Wilsdown by her side, pale and placid as ever, and not in the least out of breath from the violence of the exertion, which, on the freak of the moment, he had undertaken.

“Well, carissima, I flatter myself that the opera itself never witnessed any thing like that!”

“Ah! you so frighten me!”

“Did I my pretty little gazelle?—yes, your heart beats terribly, Giulietta!”

“It beats for you!”

“Will it always do so?”

“Always—until death!”

“Yet you have loved before?”

“Never as I love you!”

“If we were to part—you would forget me?”

“Part!—no, no, I should die—but you will

never send me away—no, promise me that we shall never part?”

“But supposing I were ruined?”

“I would share your poverty with joy.”

“And if I were a criminal, a robber, a murderer?”

“Ah! dearest you jest.”

“No, but supposing I were all that I have mentioned, and worse, would you shrink in horror from my touch—would you desert me?”

“I would follow you to the end of the world.”

“And if such things existed, and I were a vampire—an evil spirit in human form, luring you to eternal destruction?”

For a moment the Italian hesitated; the strange tone of glowing irony in which Mesmer spoke, the bright, scorching glance he riveted upon her countenance, startled the deeply religious feelings with which she was imbued—but passion triumphed over super-

stition, and burying her face upon his bosom, she murmured—

“ Man or fiend—thine---thine---for ever !”

Wonderful at times was the mysterious mood with which the impostor was seized, when carried away by his wild and restless imagination, strange and awful the words to which he gave utterance ; weaker natures felt imposed on by a dread, yet resistless influence, and the most grotesque fantasies overshadowed the mind of the listener, like dim and fearful visions of another world.

Even the partakers of his pleasures, his most constant guests, the sharer, for the time, of his most passionate caresses, occasionally felt themselves separated from him by a gulf dark, broad, and impassable as the gloomy waters of Coccytus ; felt that whilst apparently admitting them to his confidence, there yet remained recesses in his memory and thought to which admission was for ever denied.

Loving the Lord of Wilsdown as Giuletta

did, with all the fiery intensity of a daughter of the sunny south, she could not help feeling a sensation of awe for her magnificent lover, and this sensation was the more powerful in his absence than when he was actually by her side. But with Mesmer familiarity might breed love the most ardent, the most devoted friendship, the intensest fear, the most burning hatred ; but never contempt. To have met his eye and said " I despise this man," would have been an impossibility, or a senseless mockery of words. Even acquainted as we are, with all the secrets of his life, we can scarcely refrain from an abhorrent admiration, a shuddering respect for the sublime perfection of his villany and the grandeur of his hypocrisy.

True, a pickpocket displays equal courage ; a housebreaker runs still greater risk, and for them we have ordinarily but pity and contempt. But our hero, bad as he is, could, under no circumstances, have become either

pickpocket or housebreaker ; nothing but the immensity of the stakes he played for, and which none but an intellect of the highest order could have aspired to, allured him to the impolitic path of crime, and the ultra dangerous attempt of baffling, by individual talent, the sacred and deeply rooted principles implanted in the social nature of the many.

Conversing gaily upon various topics, Biron and Giulietta now rambled on by the side of the lake, through flourishing orchards and flowery meadows, when the former paused and fixed his eyes in a scrutinising manner upon a bush a little way in advance of them.

“ What is it ? ” said the signora.

“ Hush ! most likely some sleeping trespasser, or perhaps poacher ; we will surprise him ; whilst I tie his arms, do you bind his feet together as firmly as you can with this handkerchief ; it will be amusing to see his consternation on awaking. ”

So saying, Mesmer advanced upon tiptoe

towards the supposed poacher, followed by Giuletta, who looked upon the whole matter as an excellent joke.

On reaching the bush, they found a man of truly Herculean proportions, wrapped in a large, thick cloak, and extended upon the ground at full length, in most profound slumber, as his loud snoring plainly evinced.

“ Now, then,” said Mesmer, who had taken off the scarf he wore round his neck, “ make a slip knot in the handkerchief and draw it tight the moment I place my knee upon his breast.”

Giuletta timidly obeyed, and in another instant the presumed poacher was tied hand and foot and gagged by our adventurer, with little consideration for his feelings, by a clod of turf, which effectually prevented all outcry.

“ Send Sago to me directly,” said Mesmer to the Neapolitan, who immediately set off in the direction of the house.

Seeing that his prisoner was unable to res-

pire, and in danger of suffocation, Biron then reluctantly removed the clod of turf from his throat, although he still kept his knee upon the chest of the presumed poacher, who, wrapt as it were in a shroud by his heavy cloak, struggled in vain with the most desperate violence.

“ Mercy !” gasped the man, “ mercy my lord, and I will confess all.”

“ It is needless,” replied Mesmer, “ I know you already.”

“ You know me ?”

“ Yes, we have met before, you would have robbed and murdered me some months ago near Primrose Hill.”

“ But how, in the devil’s name?” began Valence, for he it was, whom Monville had employed to play the spy upon the proceedings at Wilsdown, and who having lurked about the grounds and castle during the greater part of the previous night, in order to reconnoitre the *terrain*, had fallen asleep from sheer fatigue and exhaustion.

“ You would ask how I am enabled to recognise you, since the evening in question was of an almost pitchy darkness? In the first place some men have peculiar eyes—mine are like the tiger’s, I see better in the night than in the day-time, secondly, I have a singularly acute memory for voices, and yours is one not easily mistaken.”

“ I do not understand a word you say,” said Valence, doggedly, recovering from the effects of his first surprise, and that confusion of ideas generally prevalent in the brain of a man suddenly awakened by the insertion of a clod of turf between his teeth, “ I never saw you before, and what you mean by this treatment I cannot imagine,” continued the highwayman reflecting with some degree of satisfaction that his hair and whiskers were dyed, and his face stained, circumstances calculated at any rate to disguise his identity.

“ You talk absurdly,” said Mesmer, with

great coolness, "and had better at once confess your object in coming down here, or I shall consider it my duty to deliver you up to justice, but make a full confession, and I pledge you my honor, that I will neither inform against your past or present misdeeds."

The agent of Monville, for a moment, saw that his only chance was in the generosity of the young nobleman. Notwithstanding their being exercised against himself, Biron's courage and address had a sort of charm for the rough soul of Valence. Not that the latter would have refrained from revenging himself upon our hero to the utmost, had a fitting opportunity appeared, but he could not help attributing to the count a chivalrous sort of character, to which impression Mesmer's frank tone and aspect not a little conduced, and besides, felt a natural antipathy to the shuffling vindictive attorney, who employed him.

In short, yielding to circumstances, the

robber—spy confessed without circumlocution, (for he had not brains enough to invent or prevaricate with any degree of plausibility, especially beneath the scrutinising gaze of his wily conqueror,) the whole object of his visit to Wilsdown, which simply consisted in obtaining surreptitiously every information relative to its lordly owner and his doings. Valence however omitted all mention of a private plan he had formed, of breaking into the castle with three of his associates who were lurking about the neighbourhood, and committing, the very next night, a most daring burglary, on which occasion he had fondly purposed, penetrating to the very bed-room of the Count, and inflicting upon him a retaliatory horsewhipping, in return for that so energetically administered to his own carcase by our adventurer, at their former rencontre. The finger of providence, however, defeated his designs, as we have seen, by pointing out his sleeping form to his enemy. Too late, Valence perceived that the bold wickedness of a burglar,

and the brutal audacity of a highwayman, by no means rendered a man capable of sustaining the far more arduous and diplomatic character of a spy, and an eavesdropper.

How often do we find in more respectable spheres, parallel instances of people, who, from a false appreciation of their own powers and talents, though eminently successful in one position are utterly unfitted for another. Thus many a man, who, in a subordinate office, exerts a most useful and beneficial influence, as first lord of the treasury would play the very devil with a nation's prosperity; a most acute barrister may make a very inferior judge, an admirable general commit the most unheard of blunders as a statesman; a money-making shopkeeper be swamped at his first dive into the sea of grander mercantile speculation; a cook of the most exalted genius, when wedded to her master, become an absolute disgrace to the withdrawing room! Thorny are the paths of ambition, even to the least of her worshippers. The steps in the

ladder of life are many and finely graduated ; stand upon which of them you may, the ascent to that next above it, is equally difficult. The greatest genius alone, and that but rarely, has the agility to take flying leaps up whole flights of steps, without coming in contact with those intermediate. Yet, is there consolation in the reflection that on whatever part of the ladder we may stand, whether a man's birth be patrician or plebeian, whether his station be that of a gentleman or a dustman ; to ascend a step higher in the scale, affords equal excitement in the attempt, and equal gratification in the attainment. But contentment is the only true philosophy, and therefore the least studied by mankind.

“ Look here,” Sago,” said Mesmer to his trusty valet, who, just then approached, “ I have caught a rascal of a spy, come down to collect evidence for that scoundrel Monville, whom I hope I shall live to get hanged ; just take him by the feet, I will carry his head—have you brought the pistols ?”

“The implements of war are here,” replied Sago, significantly, producing a pair of the elegant and conveniently portable weapons alluded to.”

“Very good; be so kind as to shoot this gentleman if he tries to kick or struggle.”

“But what are you going to do with me? where are you taking me?” exclaimed the highwayman in terrified accents.

“No harm will be done you,” replied Biron, “you will be well fed, and treated, I shall merely take the liberty of making you my prisoner, until—it suits my pleasure to let you go.”

“But, I swear, if you let me go free—”

“Pooh, what is the value of an oath from a fellow like you. Sago, gag him with a stinging nettle if he makes any noise.”

Ten minutes later, Valence, the robber, and emissary of lawyer Monville, was securely lodged in a subterranean dungeon of the castle, which had formerly been applied to a similar purpose by the “maternal ancestors” of the

Counts de Biron in the feudal, or as I have, in a former novel, explained—"few'd all" ages.

"Make yourself at home," said Mesmer politely. "Sago, see that my worthy guest has a loaf of the best bread, and a pitcher of the freshest spring water regularly every morning, and let him have a truss of straw and a towel. I wish to combine nutritious food, with cleanliness, comfort, and simplicity."

A horrible groan reverberated through the vault as the trap door, forming its only entrance, was slammed to, and fastened with an enormous padlock.

"So much for business," quoth Lord Wilsdown, gaily, "and now for supper. Sago, my hookah!"

"I am curious to know the ultimate result of these proceedings," muttered Sago, monologically, "I improve in a pecuniary point of view, but the tranquillity of my slumbers, is by no means on the increase. My noble master says conscience is a bug-bear—mine

bites and hugs me most uncommonly, I hope, at any rate, that his lordship will keep on the right side of the law as far as possible, or by the——”

“Sago! why the devil don’t you bring me my pipe?”

CHAPTER XV.

THE HAREM--THE UNEXPECTED GUEST.

SARDANAPALUS himself, the Assyrian voluptuary, last of the giant hunter's kingly line, could not have desired a hall more gorgeous for his revels than that now entered by Mesmer.

On either side rose seven marble columns, white as the driven snow, between which stood twice seven alabaster statues, copies of the most renowned and ideal creations of the

classical and modern chisel, on pedestals of polished porphyry, curtains of crimson satin hung behind them, reflecting lifelike hues, from countless lamps, the dazzling brilliance whereof was softly tempered by ground glass globes, thus giving them, suspended as they were from golden wires of inconceivable tenuity, the appearance of floating spheres of glowing silver. At either end of the saloon were archways wreathed with flowers and evergreens, in which were fitted mirrors of gigantic proportions, reaching completely to the ground, and artfully contrived to convey the idea of an interminable series of equally splendid apartments. At the base of every statue, and on either side of the archways reclined lions of *verde nutico*, and in the centre of the hall was a large table of oval shape, covered with every conceivable delicacy, and the rarest wines in coolers of frosted silver elaborately carved, whilst Grecian vases of the most beautiful shapes, contained the choicest

and most odoriferous flowers, and relays of ices of peach and nectarine rose continually from below upon a smaller spiral table in the centre.

The floor of this magnificent hall was inlaid with the most cunning devices, in various coloured woods, and in the centre was covered by the skins of bears and tigers.

Around the table were couches, sofas, and ottomans of the most luxurious and inviting aspect, gazing upon which fatigue and weariness fled howling away, whilst subdued though powerful tones of celestial music swelled upon the air from some invisible source, and harmonised the soul to pleasing and poetical thoughts without interrupting or disturbing the course of lively conversation—

Many and beautiful lay those around,
Like flowers of different hue, and clime, and root,
In an exotic garden, sometimes found,
With cost, and care, and warmth, induced to shoot,
One with her auburn tresses lightly bound,
And fair brows gently drooping—

Sipped, wide awake, the rosy-lipped champagne! forgive me noble ghost—departed Byron—let the ‘hero worship’ with which my soul hath drank so deeply for your greatness, be my excuse for thus adapting to somewhat different circumstances, the lines of beauty I have dared to quote.

In graceful attitudes and costumes of infinite tastefulness, reclined upon each couch a lovely girl engaged in laughing converse, or the more material, though not less evanescent discussion of the delicacies upon the table, whilst the Lord of Wilsdown himself, seated by the side of *Giulietta*, drank from a beaker of rock crystal set in burnished gold, draught upon draught, of potent *Johannisberg*, till even *his* cheeks became faintly flushed, and seizing his guitar, he poured forth an impassioned melody, whilst his eyes darted like lightning from beauty to beauty, till they finally rested upon the last, and favorite of his additions to his harem—*Giulietta*.

He had indeed collected a most superb seraglio, and what was still more ingenious, contrived to keep his odalisks in perfect order; and by innumerable devices to avert that terrible disease—*ennui*; generally so fatal to the peace of such establishments.

But Mesmer passed much of his time in instructing his fair mistresses in the wiles and sophistries of the insidious system, miscalled Epicureanism, which he had himself adopted, and as day after day passed in pic-nics, rides, billiards, music, feasting, and dancing, moreover as opium was, without their knowledge, artfully mingled in the wine they drank, the poor deluded victims of his insatiable lust, who had been, one by one, seduced from the ways of innocence and virtue by the wiles of the unwearied sensualist, lived in a sort of dreaming excitement, and fancied themselves in a manner transported to another world, of which Mesmer was at once the presiding spirit, the monarch, and the creator.

“ More champagne !” exclaimed Biron, “ and a dance ! ho ladies fair, a dance !”

The girls started from their couches as if by magnetic sympathy (which was in fact the case) at his words, and the young Lord having stamped thrice upon the ground the invisible music commenced a series of rapid waltzes. Round and round the hall they whirled till they resembled a nunnery of dancing dervishes, if such a poetic fiction may be allowed as a simile. Never, perhaps, before were collected such a galaxy of loveliness of form and feature united to such picturesque costumes, and graceful moyements, as upon this occasion. Mesmer himself seized a bottle of imperial Tokay, and half emptying it into a silver flagon raised it to his moustachied lips with a triumphant glance at the maddening gyrations of the beings he had lured to an abyss from which the egress was beset with insurmountable difficulties. Wildly his large dark eyes imbibed

the various charms that gleamed by turns upon his soul, and exclaimed exultingly as he tossed off the golden draught he held in his hand—
“Is not such an existence worthy of the wise? is it not godlike to enjoy as I do?—virtue—propriety—devotion! ha! ha! ha! what vain and puerile delusions! What profit they to the ascetic who, after plaguing himself with their conservation through three score years, finds himself the tenant of a damp unwholesome coffin—yet if there be a world beyond the grave?—Then welcome when it comes!—progression seems the principle of nature, perhaps five more senses may be added to our means of enjoyment!—Pshaw! away with metaphysics, they but lead to vague and ugly thickets of the thoughts in which refreshing fruits are vainly sought! I'll none of them—Giulietta here is to your beauty!

And Mesmer emptied the remainder of the Tokay into his goblet, and was about to raise

it to his lips, when a sudden rustling behind one of the curtains, forcibly arrested his attention.

"Somebody is entering by the window!" exclaimed Giulietta.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Tneodosia, "if it were robbers!

"How terrible!" exclaimed Rosalind.

"How mysterious!" muttered Cecilia.

"Who is there?" said Lord Wilsdown, loudly, advancing angrily towards the window, whence the noise proceeded. "Some insolent lackey playing the spy I suppose!" he muttered grimly. "I'll teach the varlet to make his master turn comedian for his amusement."

Could it be possible that Valence's accomplices had resolved to attack the castle?—but no, the idea seemed preposterous, they could never venture upon such unheard of audacity.

Mesmer approached the window, when the curtains were thrown violently aside, and a

figure, whose aspect struck terror into the hearts of the women, bounded into the room with a maniac yell, that caused even our hero's blood to run cold for a moment, and that of the girls to congeal in their veins with horror.

"Guy Merlmore !" exclaimed Mesmer, staggering back some paces from this unexpected apparition.

The madman, for he it was, who had again, with surprising ingenuity, effected his escape, and either by chance, or instinct, found his way to Wilsdown, replied to the peer's exclamation by a second yell, little inferior to the first in harshness and duration, and glared upon the impostor with a strange mixture of insane ferocity, and conscious recognition.

His dress consisted of a cloak, lined with scarlet cloth, which he wore inside out, and a military foraging cap, whilst his nether man was habited in tight elastic drawers and boots, the former being sustained by a silk handker-

chief tied about his waist ; with the exception of his shirt, we have enumerated every garment worn by him. In his hand he held a gardener's spade from which drops of blood were trickling, to increase the alarm of the female spectators, on his entrance.

“ Well how are you Mr. Guy ? said Mesmer with assumed *sang froid*, I am happy to see you—take care, don't spoil the marble floor with that clumsy spade of yours.”

“ *That* dog will never wag his tail again ?” said Guy Merlmore, with a hoarse laugh.

“ No ? well I am glad to hear it, but you must be tired, sit down and take some supper.”

“ Well, if it is not poisoned, I will.”

Mesmer made signs to the ladies of his seraglio to leave them alone, and Giulietta giving him a significant nod, glided away with the rest, whilst the madman threw himself upon a sofa, laying his formidable weapon by his side, and began to eat with the air of a starved wolf, in winter, in a Polish forest.

“And now my friend,” said Lord Wilsdown, “tell me how you managed to escape from those rascally jailors of yours?”

“Why the fact is,” said the lunatic, confidentially, first looking in all directions to make sure that he was not over-heard—the fact is I caught a flash of forked lightning in the garden, and harnessed it to a cloud that was just passing—you see the advantages of the plan?”

“Clearly,” replied Mesmer gravely.

“Well, away I went at a gradient of a million degrees, and after passing Kamschatka, and Kensington gardens, I found myself near this castle, and having blown out the brains of some lion or tiger, in the court yard, managed to climb in at the window as you see---ha, ha, ha, ha!”

“Ha, ha, ha! capital!” said Mesmer, with affected sympathy. “You know where you are now, I suppose?”

“Of course I do---in the palace of the magician Fracabas.”

“You are right.”

“And you are Fracabas?”

“I am.”

“Then the hour has arrived!” shouted Guy Merlmore with maniacal exultation.

At this moment a brace of pistols rose through the trap door in the centre of the table to which we have already alluded.

“Silly girl,” muttered Mesmer, “she will spoil all.” Luckily the madman did not perceive this phenomenon, or his suspicions might have been aroused, and he have either been seized by one of his violent fits, during which he destroyed everything around him, or he might have again effected his escape, which was an event that by no means coincided with the rapidly formed schemes of our hero.

“Tell me now,” said the madman earnestly, “since you are the magician Fracabas, where I

can find my mutual enemy, Cashall, the merchant, who robbed me of my property by his rascality, and with the assistance of one Monville, a vile pettifogger of an attorney, reduced me to beggary by a forged deed—I see the whole trick clearer than ever---where, where, can I find these wretches — speak and--- ha, ha, ha! I will give you land, in the moon and the dog star!

“Cashall,” said Biron solemnly “*is dead!*”

“*Dead?* and I not there to see him die! Oh hell! and Monville?”

“Lives---but I will take you to him——”

“When?” shrieked the madman, starting up and rolling his eyes with indescribable ferocity.”

“Soon,” said Biron.

“But when, to night?”

“Impossible!”

“To-morrow?”

“The moment I can discover his retreat.”

"It is well, Count de Biron," said the lunatic, suddenly, to our adventurer's astonishment, assuming the air of a perfectly sane man, and addressing him by his real name, "you are the best friend I ever had, and stay---I will tell you all---all---But let me think." Guy pressed his hand to his forehead for a few minutes, and then resumed very rapidly, as if fearing that he should not have time to complete his narration---You think perhaps I cared for the loss of fortune---you think that it was gold alone I lost---how you are mistaken! I had debts of honor which to this day remain unpaid, I had---the madman's voice grew hollow and spectral as he uttered these words---"I had a mistress more beautiful than an angel---I could not wed her to beggary---If you had but seen ---" at this crisis the madman again started up, and roared like an infuriate wild beast, with two bounds he was at the door, and rushed along a passage. Mesmer followed him, but could never have succeeded in over-

taking him, had not the maniac found himself opposite a dead wall at the termination of the corridor, and being thus compelled to retrace his steps, was met by Biron, who felled him to the ground by one dexterous blow, and did not leave him until he had seen him confined in a sort of extemporaneous straight-jacket, and safely lodged in a secure, though commodious apartment.

“I think,” murmured Sago as he received his master’s directions, concerning this last arrival, “I think this castle is getting to be a sort of cross between a ——— and a bastille. ‘Self preservation is the first law of nature’—this cannot last long---I must take care of the holy unity---number one, vulgar people would say---

Ex uno disce omnes.

Meanwhile the madman paraded solemnly, with arms behind him, and eyes riveted upon

his boots and white cotton continuations, imagining himself Napoleon, and firmly persuaded that he had just effected his escape from the Island of Elba, to become the prisoner of generous England, the victim of their *low* persecutions at St. Helena.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE COURT OF JUSTICE.

LORD WILSDWON was both shocked and surprised, on returning to town, at being politely arrested by an officer with a warrant, and taken before a magistrate to defend himself against an accusation of the most serious character.

Friskerton happening to be with our adventurer at the time, immediately volunteered to accompany him to the police court, to which they accordingly proceeded in the carriage of

the former ; Biron professing great indignation at the circumstance, and indulging in sundry edifying hints as to the tranquillity of mind induced by a high degree of conscious innocence, and the calm determination to inflict upon his traducers the utmost rigour of the law. His companion was infinitely more enraged at the occurrence, and beguiled the way by a series of forcible and varied anathemas, ejaculated with all the energy of a four and twenty pounder or a fashionable sermon-thunderer of the Dr. Damnemall* category.

On approaching a police court, the observer is struck by a heterogeneous assemblage of pauper-like creatures of the most miserable aspect, policemen and shabby genteel blackguards in great variety. These people seem to have a pleasant, easy life of it, if one may judge by appearances ; their chief occupation

* See 'The Bubble Family' by Lady Bulwer Lytton.

apparently consisting in lounging about the doorways and passages of the court, and standing as much as possible in the way of everybody desiring entrance to, or egress from these unworthy temples of Themis.

On penetrating to the interior where justice is done by the people, or rather, in many cases, to speak metaphorically the people are done by the justice, two figures at once most forcibly arrest your attention. They are—

Alpha.—The magistrate.

Beta.—The clerk.

Mr. Alpha the magistrate is a fat gentleman with rosy cheeks and a remarkably low forehead, he wears spectacles, and acts the farce assigned to him with admirable gravity and command of countenance.

Mr. B—— the clerk is thin in proportion, and bald headed altogether, to adopt an often used simile, very much like a partridge cane split half-way up, and dressed by a very bad tailor, in a threadbare suit of black, and a white

strangler, as poor Brummell's triumph of genius is now facetiously denominated.

These two humans—this is a word after my own heart, and supplies the want in our language of a fair equivalent to the German *Mench*, superbly—these two humans, I repeat, serve out penalties to the guilty, and decide differences and difficulties; with a promptness and *sang froid*, that would occasionally astonish the Lord Chancellor. Not but that they have their nice points and legal quibbles too, now and then, as will be seen hereafter.

On the excellent division—of—labor, principle, the great Alpha does the dignity, and the Beta the working moiety of the business. That is to say, Alpha sits at a large desk in a comfortable arm-chair, pokes the fire, reads the newspaper, and brow-beats accusers. Beta fidgets on a high stool at a diminutive table, listens to the witnesses, and cross examines them with all the *polished urbanity* of—a leading barrister, if not with equal acuteness.

Just as our adventurer reached the penetralia of the court, the night causes, as they are termed were being dispatched, and a man of most ruffianly aspect at the bar, was charged with stealing sundry bottles of porter from the yard of a certain public house. At first sight, the case appeared simple enough; the evidence was clear, and there seemed little to trouble the muddled brains of the magistrate in his decision, when lo! a sudden and appalling difficulty arose—it appeared that the porter and the bottles belonged to the landlord of the gin shop, and the refreshing beverage in their interior, pertained to his pot boys; though how it became the latter's, we do not remember. Hence arose the question—a question far too important we are persuaded to excite the risibility of the acute and nicely discriminating readers—ought there to be two separate indictments, the one for the porter and the other for the bottles, or might both be included under one and the same indictment? Woefully were the learned

Dogberry and his thin satellites puzzled. For full an hour they discussed this deeply interesting point, they consulted every book in their library from the first volume of the statutes at large to Johnson's dictionary inclusive, and finally—deferred the question for future consideration.

Wisdom, saith Solomon, is known of her children.—Assuredly if our magistrates were ever children of that august lady—their own mother would scarcely recognize them in their days of maturity!

A broker here came to swear an affidavit, as to deserted premises, with a view to obtain possession of a house, by a summary ejectment, of the refractory tenant. The clerk read it over very slowly to the evident annoyance of the swearer, who was in a hurry.

“Sir,” said the clerk solemnly, “you talk here of a three stalled stable?”

“Yes, it is in the description of the premises, pray do not detain me,” said the other.

“ Three stalled,” said the thin clerk, “ is not grammar.”

“ Then what the devil is ?” quoth the broker impatiently.

“ Three *stall*, is the correct term, sir, three stall stable, and I shall take the liberty of altering the mistake.”

“ Alter what you please,” retorted the broker contemptuously, “ only let me go about my business.”

“ Take care what you are saying, sir, or I will not do it at all ; do you know who I am, sir ?”

“ Yes,” said the other, who seemed a sensible, straightforward man, “ the servant of the public though you fancy yourself entitled to insult them. Three stalled is right ; and if you have a Johnson you may satisfy yourself in a moment.”

“ Then, get down Johnson !” said the clerk in a passion.

One of the nondescript loungers about the

court, before alluded to, hastened to bring the desired volume from the book case.

"Now, sir," said the thin clerk triumphantly.

"Well, *now*, sir?" replied the broker, pointing with his finger to the word, "you perceive that you are wrong after all?"

The opinionated clerk gave a suppressed howl of vexation, muttered something about old edition, impertinence, &c., and proceeded to *alter* the affidavit on his own grammatical authority, in defiance of Johnson and the broker to boot.

"Well," said the latter, with an undisguised grin, "I must take care that the mistake is *fore-stalled* the next time."

"Sir," said the clerk angrily, puns are out of place in a court of justice.

"I wish punching heads were not," muttered the broker as he departed, "I should like to smash that fellow's empty nutshell for him,

taking up one's time with his foolery, and to-day, quarter day too!"

The magistrate who had been out to refresh himself, re-entered the court at this crisis, and the night causes were resumed.

The next criminal on the list was a little boy of about eleven years of age, accused of the heinous wickedness of carrying, on the previous evening, a very suspicious looking piece of bacon, of which he gave a very insufficient account, according to the policeman's evidence, who feeling cold, and wishing to warm himself at the station-house fire, had adopted the usual expedient in such cases, of arresting the first manageable person he could lay hands on.

"Where did you get the bacon, eh?" said the magistrate sternly, "and where were you taking it?"

"A man gave it me, to carry to No. —, Holborn."

"Who was the man?"

"I don't know."

“ You don’t know, eh? you little rascal—policeman produce the bacon.”

“ Here it is your worship.”

“ Is it fat or lean?”

“ I should call it streaky, your worship.”

“ Well I suppose I must remand you until the owner of the bacon appears.”

“ You had better send him to the tread-mill for a week at once,” humanely suggested the clerk.

“ Perhaps it would be as well,” and the boy was taken crying from the court.

“ Is he an old offender?” said Dogberry.

“ Never saw him here before, your worship.”

“ Call on the next.”

This time a most extraordinary figure made its appearance at the bar.

“ An Ojybbeway Indian, by Jove!” exclaimed Friskerton, who had hitherto sucked the knob of his ebony walking cane in profound silence.

“ This woman, please your worship”—began a policeman.

“Woman!” said the magistrate, “you do not mean to say it is a *woman*?”

“It certainly does not look much like one?” said the clerk with a grin.

The poor creature presented indeed a most epicene aspect. A dirty cotton handkerchief of that dusty brownish indescribable color peculiar to the garments of the poor in this country, was twisted round her head like a turban, completely concealing her hair, and harmonizing wonderfully with the hue of her bony features, on which a beard and a moustache appeared, that would not have disgraced a cornet in the guards; a ragged cloak was her only garment, and it appeared that she had been taken up the preceding night walking about in a state of total nudity, having pawned all her clothes in order to procure gin for her husband, who had been run over by a cab, the day previous.

Such horrors appeared almost incredible, yet they are facts. It is also a fact that the poor

wretch above described, was, after being reprimanded by the magistrate, dismissed without any assistance being afforded her. Surely under such circumstances, a little more active humanity should be adopted.

It may be conceived that Lord Wilsdown took little interest in the proceedings we have described, whatever amusement they might at another time have afforded. Though not betraying any external symptoms of uneasiness, it required all the firmness he could command to refrain from signs of impatience, and apprehension. Again and again he reviewed the history of his misdeeds, and again, and again repeated to himself the impossibility of any tangible proof appearing against him. All those whose words could injure his fame, were bound by the strongest ties of self interest to remain silent, and in his worst iniquities he was himself his only confidant, still some unforeseen casualty might have occurred—"But it can be nothing serious," thought Mes-

mer—"yet—if it should be—I have lost the best opportunity of flight--and had I fled, it were a confession of my guilt. No, I must brave it out, at the worst I have my universal panacea, my *elixir mortis*, the sole medicine for curing every disease, moral and physical—the key to the world beyond, or eternal darkness and rest. Mesmer de Biron is not destined to be hooted by a mob, and destroyed by a hangman!"

They were now shown into a private room, and the magistrate opened the business by saying—

"My lord, there is a most serious accusation laid against you, which I trust you will be able to refute with little difficulty—My Lord, you are accused of --of---excuse my plainness," stammered the magistrate, who quailed beneath the indignant glance of scorn which Mesmer riveted upon him.

"Well sir, of what am I accused?" said Lord Wilsdown, sternly.

“Of murder!” said the magistrate---“of murdering Mr. Theodore Ramsay.”

“Mr. who?”

“Theodore Ramsay!”

“Ah! I remember, a young artist, he was about to paint something for me about a year ago, but took offence at some rather severe criticism I applied to his paintings, and went, if I remember rightly, to Paris.”

“Yes, my lord, as you say, he went to Paris, and has never been heard of since.”

“Indeed?---and pray what has all this to do with my murdering him? and who is the cowardly liar that dares to accuse me of so terrible a crime?”

“Mr. Monville, a solicitor, with whom you were, I believe, acquainted.”

“Acquainted?” said Biron, fiercely, “take care sir, what you say---my acquaintance does not lie amongst such *canaille*. I know this man to be a pettifogging rascal, who hates me with all the malignancy such things are capa-

ble of, because I would not allow myself to be cheated by him in some matters relating to the purchase of a house from one of his clients; however I am perfectly prepared to confront him, and to prosecute the scoundrel for perjury, as a matter of course. As for this accusation, I am at a loss to conceive what story he can possibly have invented to prove that I murdered a youth, I have not seen since a year ago, also, allow me to observe that the fact of a person being missing for twelve months, is by no means a satisfactory proof of his death, and I presume you will allow that a man must be dead, before he can be murdered?"

"Will your lordship have the kindness to read that paragraph," said the magistrate, handing to our hero a number of the *Constitutionnel* about a week old."

Mesmer took the paper, and read as follows.

The day before yesterday the remains of a human body were discovered by some fishermen in the Seine, at a short distance from Paris. It

had evidently, remained a considerable time in the water. The only token, giving any clue to the possible identity, is a small cornelian seal ring upon one of the fingers, upon which, the initials T. R., are engraved. The deceased must have been of moderate stature and slight figure, probably a young man under twenty years of age."

"And the identity is proved by the sealing?" said Lord Wilsdown, in a tone of sad interest, as if, for the moment, he forgot the *disagremens* of his own position, in his pity for the untimely fate of the young artist.

"Precisely so," replied the magistrate.

"Poor boy!" exclaimed Mesmer, "you remember," continued he, turning to Lord Friskerton, "my telling you how I saved him from starvation or suicide—and *I* should have murdered him!"

"We will now examine Mr. Monville, my lord," said the magistrate, "and your innocence

will, I trust, be soon satisfactorily established."

Monville, the attorney, was accordingly ushered in, accompanied, to Biron's ineffable astonishment, by his friend, Harry Scales, who was equally surprised at encountering our hero.

"Why, my lord, what brings you to this horrid place?" said the artist, shaking hands with Mesmer and Friskerton; nevertheless, with a dash of coldness towards the former, arising from his half belief, that the countess had been unjustly accused.

"The world is going mad, I think!" said Lord Friskerton, shrugging his shoulders.

"I am accused of murdering your young friend, Theodore Ramsay!" said Biron.

"*You*, my lord!" exclaimed Scales, starting back.

"Yes, I! of drowning him in the Seine, near Paris."

“ Good God ! what earthly grounds can there be for such a suspicion.”

“ None that I am aware of, but some base assertions of yonder trembling hound, who, at any rate, shall be punished for his villany, if there is such a thing as justice in England !”

“ He called on me, and asked me if I remembered a ring with initials upon it belonging to Ramsay. I did so perfectly, and came here to prove the identity, without knowing who was accused ; but let us hear what the wretch has to say.”

Monville, who studiously avoided meeting the eye of our adventurer, now commenced a clear and succinct narration of what he had witnessed at the Parisian gambling house, positively swearing that he had recognised Biron in the guise of the lucky stranger ; and asserting his belief, that the companion of the said stranger, was no other than the deceased Theodore Ramsay, who had been his accomplice in some

fraudulent scheme, and had been subsequently thrown into the Seine, to secure his silence and the count's safety. Monville farther stated that he could produce witnesses to prove that a person answering to the description of the mysterious gambler, had quitted the *Hotel du Diable Rue de —*, Paris, in company with a youth of the age, stature, and appearance of Theodore Ramsay. That this person called himself Richard Johnson, merchant, in his passport, and passed off his companion as his son, that he had left the hotel along with the latter, and the very same night quitted Paris *alone*, as was proved by the inspection of his passport on the road, that his supposed son had never returned to the hotel—although he had left a great coat there, which he would scarcely have neglected to call for. The great coat had, it moreover appeared, a letter addressed to T. Ramsay, Esq., in one of its pockets, and could, no doubt, be identified by some of his acquaintance. It could, moreover, be proved that the Count de Biron, now Lord Wilsdown,

was not in town at the time specified; and that the last place at which Ramsay had been seen or heard of, was at the house of his lordship.

“ Were I to follow the natural bent of my inclination,” said Lord Wilsdown, in reply, with deliberate calmness; “ I should at once declare my conviction that the whole deposition of this man, is one tissue of abominable falsehood, and quite on a par with other portions of his conduct, with which, as he is well aware, I am acquainted. To prove, however, the utter and hopeless absurdity of the infamous calumny he has had the insanity to advance against me. I shall, assuming all the facts he has stated to be perfectly capable of proof, briefly show, firstly, that they do not in the slightest degree, tend to sustain the charge he has made; secondly, in the simplest and most incontrovertible manner, I shall altogether refute the ridiculous accusation.”

“Your self-possession does your lordship credit,” said the magistrate, frowning severely at Monville, and already strongly prejudiced in favour of the wily peer, though an hour ago he had been more than half persuaded of his guilt.

“Excuse me however for taking up your time by first mentioning a fact or two relative to Mr. Monville, in order to account for his malignant feeling towards myself, and his capability of committing any crime, and of perjuring himself to any conceivable extent.”

“I do not see in what way these libellous assertions of his lordship concern the present charge,” said Monville, with irritation.

“No, truth is a libel,” said Mesmer, sarcastically, “but you can bring an action against me---and as by that time you will probably be a convict at the hulks, a jury would, doubtless, estimate the damages done, for injury to your character---very exorbitantly.”

“Mr. Monville, I must beg that you will not again interrupt his lordship in his defence,” said the magistrate sourly. Lord Wilsdown continued.

“Some time ago I discovered traces of a most nefarious plot, contrived by the gentleman before you, and a certain Mr. Cashall, since deceased, by which a near connexion of mine, Mr. Guy Merlmore, was completely ruined, and still more dreadful to narrate, driven into a state of insanity, from which he has never since recovered. Though I have not yet been able to obtain sufficient legal evidence of this infamous transaction, I have no doubt that by persevering in my enquiries, I shall soon be enabled to do so. I am quite ready to enter into all the particulars if Mr. Monville desires it---”

The magistrate, who perceived that our hero's accuser became momentarily more agitated, and betrayed every symptom of guilt, whilst vainly striving to imitate Lord Wils-

down's composure, regarded him with increasing sternness, and said---“my lord, I fear this is a very bad business indeed, but will you have the kindness at once to refute the charge brought against you; what you have now stated, may be a matter for after consideration.”

Monville began to feel excessively uncomfortable. His hatred and revengeful feelings towards Biron, had led him into the error of overrating, to an exaggerated extent, the weight of his own testimony, and the circumstantial evidence by which it was supported. He saw the slight effect his statement produced upon the magistrate, the utter immobility of Mesmer; he had exhausted his weightiest proofs, had reserved no striking argument, no overwhelming fact, to confound, and, as it were, crush the defence of his antagonist. The earth seemed to sink beneath his feet, and he glanced uneasily at the door with a vague notion that the outside of the court might prove more conducive to his personal safety than the interior.

He had, moreover, by mature reflection upon the extreme caution with which the fraud upon Guy Merlmore had been effected, convinced himself of the impossibility of Biron's actually professing the proofs he asserted, and was persuaded that all his knowledge upon the subject must have been derived from the ravings of the lunatic, and his own acute powers of deduction. But with the presence of the Count, all Monville's fears returned with redoubled strength, and he could have torn his hair with rage, at his own folly in commencing a fresh struggle with so remorseless and dangerous a foeman.

Recalling all his past experience of Mesmer de Biron's character, he felt a chill sensation of undescribable terror, gradually creeping, like a cold and slimy serpent over his frame, as the Count resumed his defence in the calm confident tone of one who rather condescends than at all deems it necessary to defend his character against a vile and slanderous accusation.

“Even presuming,” continued Lord Wilsdown, “that all Mr. Monville states is perfectly true, it must, nevertheless, at once, strike even the meanest capacity, the most obtuse observation that my identity with this lucky gambler, at Paris, is the only point that affects me personally, even in the slightest degree. That disproved, it is plain that the whole accusation at once falls to the ground.”

“Undoubtedly, nothing can be more palpably evident,” said the magistrate, nodding sagaciously, and wiping the mist off his spectacles, with his coat sleeve.

“I might enlarge,” resumed Biron, “on the almost absolute want of evidence on this point; for the unsupported testimony of Mr. Monville, who has every reason to fear and hate me, can weigh but little in the matter ——”

“There were others present who might recognise you,” said the attorney, doggedly, “they may be sent for.”

“Scarcely,” said Mesmer, with unruffled

equanimity, "for, even by your own garbled statement, the man you wish to identify me with, was totally different in appearance, from myself, both as to age, figure, complexion, and even the color of his hair."

"He was evidently disguised, but the eyes, the height, the shape of the face, eyebrows, and moustache, were the same to a hair, none could mistake them," said Monville, desperately; becoming momentarily more and more uneasy, and almost doubting himself the fact he was so deeply interested in proving.

"Such similarities are to be met with hourly in every street in London," replied Mesmer, shrugging his shoulders.

"Certainly," said the magistrate, "we often mistake strangers for people we know—there is nothing in that at all."

"But could this person," continued Lord Wilsdown, "be proved to be a perfect facsimile of myself, the impossibility of any body being in two places at one and the same time,

would still remain as much an impossibility as ever. On the day this fellow swears to having seen me in Paris, I happened to be in Devonshire, and can produce a dozen witnesses, or twenty, if required, by tomorrow evening, to prove the fact.

“That is all that is requisite, my lord,” said the magistrate, with politeness, as a mere matter of form, I must give you into custody of the Black Rod, but I do not hesitate to say that I am as perfectly convinced of your innocence as of my own.”

“I thank you for your good opinion. said Lord Wilsdown, with haughty condescension, “but as I wish, no doubt, to remain upon the mind of any body present, as to the utter falsehood of the absurd charge made against me, I must briefly allude to one more trifling point—viz.: that Ramsay was last seen at my house. The fact is that I engaged him to copy some sketches of mine, but offended his vanity by some rather severe criticism upon

his painting, and he left my house, as my servants can testify, some days previous to my starting for Devonshire. I think he mentioned, before our disagreement, some intention of visiting Paris; however, I paid him well for his trouble, as my cheque book can be brought to prove, and since that time have neither seen or heard of him. Indeed if there is any truth in this Monville's narration, it seems more than probable that the unfortunate youth, who was, I understand, always wild and eccentric in his ways, has fallen a victim to some diabolical scheme. Though, I must, in justice, remark that whoever the mysterious gambler may have been, there does not appear a shadow of evidence that he was the murderer of the youth supposed to have been identical with Ramsay. Of his death I think there can be no doubt. But that is no affair of mine at present.

“ I shall, of course, the moment I am at liberty, prosecute Mr. Monville, for perjury, and renew my endeavours to expose his other

villanies, which have only been relaxed on account of my own unfortunate position with regard to Mr. Merlmore's family. But sir," added Mesmer, impressively, "where truth and justice are at stake I allow no selfish considerations to influence my conduct. At the same time I think it is your duty to arrest Mr. Monville, at once, or ——"

"By ——!" exclaimed the magistrate, "he is gone—after him directly--my lord, I sincerely regret the false and unjust position you have been placed in—is he anywhere about the court?—is he in the next room?"

"No, your worship," said a police officer, re-entering the room, "he has taken to his heels, but there are four of them after him, and the cry of stop thief has been raised already."

"My lord, after this we may dispense with the Black Rod," said the magistrate politely, "I hope no misplaced pity will induce you to spare the scoundrel when he is taken."

“ You may depend upon my prosecuting,” said Biron.

“ The rascal ought to be flogged through London !” said Friskerton indignantly.

“ I never before heard of such brazen audacity !” said Scales.

“ I think it was rather too bold an attempt,” said Mesmer, “ and were it not for the miserable death of this poor young Ramsay, I could laugh at the scamp’s effrontery.”

“ But do you think it really was Ramsay ?” said Friskerton.

“ The ring and coat identify him beyond the possibility of doubt,” said Scales.

“ My impression,” said Lord Wilsdown, musingly, “ is that he committed suicide. Probably, having once commenced a gambler’s existence, he continued it until reduced to destitution ; that he had a suicidal bias, is proved by the fact, that, but for my accidentally encountering him one evening, he was about to throw himself from Westmin-

ster Bridge. However, we can only conjecture, he is at any rate released from all future miseries, and I imagine from his peculiar disposition, that his life could scarcely upon the whole have proved a happy one."

"I think not too," said Scales, "and quite take your lordship's view as to his having committed suicide. He frequently talked about it, at the time I knew him."

"Well," said Friskerton, "if there is any truth in that rascally attorney's story, I should like to know who the mysterious gambler was, and why he had such luck. It is impossible to cheat the Bank, is it not?"

"Impossible," said Biron.

Monville contrived to baffle his pursuers, and after some half-hour's converse with the magistrate upon the heinous audacity of that individual's perjury, and many assurances on the part of Dogberry of his conviction that Lord Wilsdown was innocent of everything,

but having by his zeal in the cause of truth and justice, incurred the malicious enmity of the unscrupulous attorney, our hero and Lord Friskerton (the artist being otherwise engaged,) went to dine together at Verrey's; the former expressing the greatest annoyance at the escape of his unprincipled accuser, and vowing to get him transported to the Australian colonies, as soon as the public could lay hands upon his person, a catastrophe *entre nous* that would have given little real satisfaction to the bastard noble, who was well aware that by frequent dips, even into the deepest of wells, there is a considerable probability of at length reaching the bottom, and finding there a treasure which he considered far too costly to be shared with the rest of his fellow creatures—TRUTH.

“ Well,” thought Mesmer to himself, I have fought my way through that difficulty with *eclat*, but this fellow seems troublesome; I must ferret him out, having first put the police on a wrong scent, and—I think a *billet doux a la Cashall* will

relieve me of further trouble. Let me see, the duchess returns to town to-morrow, *that* must be decided beyond possibility of retraction; and then, as these infernal duns are becoming ferocious, I must draw another cheque upon the philosopher's stone to appease the cannibals. Little Neldoni is as bold as a tigress, and *rusée comme un démon* (to quote that fool Dumas, with his cottages ornées in Grosvenor Square and Piccadilly,)* her *clair voyance* is as perfect and she is still more manageable than that poor young puppy Ramsay; Ems and Aix shall be our *cour des miracles* † this time. What a fascinating little seraph Giulietta will look in pantaloons.

* See 'Pauline.' He is not alone in his absurdity. Several other popular French authors have become notorious for their blunders, regarding the geography, titles &c. of England and Germany.

† See Victor Hugo's 'Notre Dame.

CHAPTER XVII.

DUNS.

THE extravagance of our hero's expenditure, since his marriage, and the success of his gambling speculations, was almost without a precedent. The house in Belgrave Square to which he had moved, was furnished with a luxury which the famed palace of Aladdin could scarcely have competed with. The most splendid entertainments, rivalling in costliness

and magnificence, those of the later Roman emperors, followed one another in uninterrupted series.

Lord Wilsdown's debts were enormous in amount, and multitude; and notwithstanding the reports industriously circulated, at his secret instigation, as to the immense extent of his fortune; his creditors with a vague presentiment that all was not right, became clamorous for payment.

Mesmer was dunned incessantly. At first he humored the exorbitant rascals, as he termed them, by an occasional call, a suave and often repeated promise, or even a trifle upon account, but at length they began to grow outrageous in their demands, and as the witty author of a recent and instructive book on Dunnism expresses it, would *not* listen to the voice of the charmer.

“ Finding the constant succession of single knocks an unremitting nuisance, our adventurer managed to remedy it in the following manner.

He contrived a simple piece of machinery, by means of which the bell was detached from the bell-pull, and at the same time the knocker drawn *inside* the door, through a small trap, which immediately closed and displayed to the horrified creditor a portrait of a grinning skull with the following laconic inscription—

“ Wait till the day of judgment.”

The duns accordingly, finding that they could no longer enjoy the healthy and entertaining exercise of knocking, and that the bell declined ringing, resolved *nem con* to take the hint and to hasten the day of judgment--and execution as much as the proceedings of the Court of Queen's Bench rendered it practicable.

In this determination they displayed great *judgment* but the difficulty of *execution* was still greater. To commence an action at law against Lord Wilsdown for the recovery of debts, it was necessary to serve his lordship personally with a writ. Now as they could

never get into his house even to see one of the servants, this was by no means an easy matter to effect--Mesmer himself--though they did not know it---was residing at a villa a short distance from town where in truth he realized his noble progenitor's description of the vagrant Childe Harrold most eminently---

“ A youth

Who ne'er in virtue's ways did take delight
But spent his days in riot most uucouth,
And vexed with mirth the drowsy ear of night,
Ah me ! in sooth he was a shameless wight,
Sore given to revel and ungodly glee,
Few earthly things found favor in his sight
Save concubines and carnal companie,
And flaunting wassailers of low and high degree.

By the way, *apropos de duns*, the work we have alluded to above, ‘Hints on the nature and management of duns, by the hon. —, a younger son,’ contains some excellent hints on the subject, and afforded us an hour's agreeable amusement. The author is evidently a gentleman. There is much graceful humour both in his prose and his poetry, and as train of

lively irony pervades the whole. On the subject of primogeniture he writes with a vigour and bitterness we much admire, as well as his classical motto—

Haud ignara mali miseris succurrere disco.

Myself a victim to insatiate duns,
I learn to pity other younger sons.

We can sympathise with the indignation Mr. ——naturally feels against this absurd and unjust regulation, although ourselves an elder indeed an only son. But what avails primogeniture where the estate is not entailed—and the heir is disinherited.

There *are* such things as paternities, who shave so superhumanly close as to cut off their heirs with a shilling. Men have jested on the scaffold. John of Gaunt punned upon his name when in the agonies of dissolution. We take things coolly—for instance our claret iced and our time in telling a story. Glory to the sainted ghost of our grandfather for his prophetic forethought!

With freedom---twenty years, and---a thing

or two besides, what matters a few thousands more or less. Man can but love, strive, eat, drink---pshaw!

Integer vitæ, sceleris que purus
Non eget aught worth the trouble of having,
If you're neither government clerk, or soldier,
Europe's your homestead.

After all, even for the most favored eldest son, it is a dull, nervous state of existence, that *waiting*, and the courageous detrimental who cuts his own way boldly to fortune and is almost to be envied his excitement and triumph by the future lord of acres and mansions

Can all the fame, the honors, the wealth, the social pleasures of the world replace for an instant the ineffable sensations of the first pure passionate love of youth, or the generous emotions of benevolence before the icy sword of disappointment and the dull iron of cold wordly ambition have entered the recesses of the heart and chilled its pulsations to the monotony of what men term—life? Can all the resources of art, and luxury, and

science, supply one thrill of unsophisticated delight, when doubt and present care are utter strangers, to the sated soul of experience?

Yes, thou imagination! most glorious possession of man, thou bearest us to other worlds, far, far removed from earthly cares and griefs. We become as little children ---and a heaven is indeed opened unto us, we shake off the weary load of ancient and modern lore, forget the endless list of sciences through which men wade in turn, still seeking for great truths in hopeless vanity, the statistics, the agitations of mortals are forgotten, and the free spirit bounds with sportive wonder through the fields of fantasy, till awakened from our dreams we murmur with the illustrious German in mournful, albeit heroic arrogancy—

Philosophy I've pondered o'er
With medical and legal lore,
And—to my woe—theology
With eager thirst of knowledge high,
And here I stand, poor foolish man,
As wise as when I first began.

How true, indeed, the proverb which warns us that "where ignorance is bliss 'twere folly to be wise." The fruit of the tree of knowledge is experience—bitter is its flavour.

To return from our imaginative rambles to the subject of duns.

However amusing it may be to read the Honorable Mr. ——'s facetious account of tailors humourously victimised by headless nails driven into deal chests for the especial accommodation of their wearied limbs, however we may laugh at the dismay of the horror-struck tradesman on beholding his debtor in the green (painted) stage of the Cholera, the Oxford duns belabouring the door whilst the detrimental escapes by a ladder from the back windows in order to keep his dinner appointment with the punctual governor; or the awful melodrama of the younger son's last shirt, brought in with the dessert at the house where he *ought* to have dined, accompanied by the unpaid seven be-childrened washerwoman's

elegant epistle, however we may laugh at all this, and however well adapted it may be to the purpose of the jester and the anecdotemonger, the subject will ever present several serious points for consideration.

In the first place a man who has duns either intends to pay them or he does not ; now although convinced that in nine cases out of ten, duns, tailors in particular, are a set of consummate rascals, and candidly confessing, by no stretch of philanthropy, could we bring ourselves to feel anything resembling pity for their sufferings, we nevertheless regard a man who runs up bills, without a distinct intention, and consciousness of the power of paying them at some not *very* remote period to the utmost farthing, as utterly devoid of principle, in fact not one whit better than a common swindler, and infinitely inferior in respectability to the bold highwayman, who, pistol in hand, rifles the pockets of the scared traveller, who has at least the opportunity, if sufficiently courageous

of defending his property with the butt end of his riding whip, or as in such cases, discretion is the better part of valour gallantly taking to his heels, and like a good christian, putting his trust in Providence, or the approach of a patrolling policeman.

In addition to the sacrifice of justice and honor involved by the non-paying system, the force of example upon the middling and lower classes is pernicious in the extreme, the follies which the Honourable This and Captain That indulge in are not unnaturally emulated with eagerness by Smith, the clerk, or Jones, the shopkeeper, and that which to the *gentleman* and the man of pleasure is generally productive of mere temporary embarrassment, or at any rate rarely leads to serious suffering, in a lower grade is often productive of bankruptcy, ruin, and all the horrors of poverty, not only to the misguided ape of fashion, but in many cases to his innocent wife and family who have neither participated in his pleasures nor his follies,

the collateral effects of such conduct are still more extensive in their operation.

“Be neither a borrower nor a lender,” said Polonius, “and we sincerely recommend every youth whose patience may have carried him thus far in our edifying discourse, to frame the above sentence in a dun colored frame, and suspend it in his *salon* as a *morceau* which cannot too often be read, marked, and inwardly digested; to you, especially young members of the aristocracy, and squirearchy be this motto especially recommended. We write from painful experience.

How our hero settled with his creditors, will be seen in the sequel.

CHAPTER XVIII.

NOT AT HOME.

Hushed and trembling, her little soft white hands clasped upon her palpitating bosom, her eyes swimming in voluptuous tears, shaded by the long dark lashes of the cast-down lids, her exquisitely shaped lips compressed to paler rosiness, and her whole graceful form bent forward in an attitude of absorbed attention, sat the young Duchess of Villersden.

By her side was Mesmer, He spoke ra-

pidly with earnest gesture, and although almost in a whisper, not one word, one slightest intonation escaped the ear of his companion. They were alone in the boudoir of the duchess. To all others she denied herself.

“And are we,” continued Mesmer, “to be the slaves of the same musty rules of *bourgeois* etiquette, as the base grovelling herd, whose only morality, whose only sense of propriety hangs from the old saws and prejudices imbibed with the maternal milk, or the absurd customs and formalities impressed by the associations of maturer years, or are we to trust to the pure instincts and bright impulses of the heart, and with the boldness of freeborn spirits fearlessly grasp the happiness in our power. Dearest Julia—”

“Mesmer,” said the duchess, entreatingly, pushing back her fair ringlets from her throbbing temples, “be patient, oh, be patient! I cannot, must not listen to you.”

“ I will go then,” said Biron sadly, “ I will relieve you from my hateful presence.”

“ Do not torture me,” said the duchess, closing her eyes for a moment, and partially covering her face with one of her delicate hands to conceal the internal struggle of her feelings.

“ Yes,” resumed Mesmer, “ I will go — never to return, but first you shall know with how passionate, how devoted an attachment you have inspired me ; by night, by day, one dream, one vision of your ineffable being, your heavenly beauty, the silver melody of voice pervades my every sense, encircle my soul as with an atmosphere of brilliance, till my brain swims with maddening rapture at the bare thought that you *may* have felt a reciprocal sentiment whilst on the other hand there is darkness — darkness impenetrable, eternal, the darkness of despair, an annihilation ; I adore you, Julia—but pause, reflect before you plunge a dagger in a heart where

your name alone is graven, your empire alone for ever established, and ask yourself whether such another is readily to be found—or—lost !”

At the conclusion of this rhapsody, Lord Wilsdown had seized the hand of the duchess and pressed it wildly to his lips.

“Leave me,” exclaimed the duchess, vainly striving to resist an excitement gradually overpowering the efforts of her reason; “at least wait till the law-suit is decided.”

“It is decided,” said Mesmer, “at least virtually so, for the most eminent proctors inform me that there is no doubt of an immediate divorce being obtained.”

“Till then,” said Julia, faintly, her bosom burning with a feverish heat.

“No,” said Biron, you trifle with my feelings, I have confessed the inmost secrets of my soul, you know all, cruel, lovely, Julia, at once decide my fate, you love me or you love me not, own that you are mine, or let

us part for ever—doubt is the worst of miseries!”

“ I am yours,” said Julia, “ the moment the divorce is obtained.”

“ Angel,” said Mesmer, clasping her to his heart, and imprinting passionate kisses upon her cheeks and lips, “ you inspire me with new life, I feel my spirit expand beneath the influence of immeasurable delight; yes,” continued he, half releasing her from his bold embrace, “ there must be some truth in the ancient legend, that in a former state of being, man and woman formed but one entity, whilst here the erring halves are doomed to wander, seeking ever with insatiable longing the renewal of their prenatal union, yet, alas, marriages are not made in heaven, as the popular proverb asserts, and, but too often like inharmonious tones in music, unequal moieties are joined in crashing discord, hence all the miseries of a married life—happy are they, who, like us, find in the days of youth the

completion of their being here and hereafter to be united in celestial transports! I have fancied that I loved before this, more than once—it was but fancy—never till now have I felt sensations, such as now, irradiate my whole essence—Julia, it was, it must have been, it is our destiny to be united in the bonds of imperishable and unfading love. Once more, divine Julia, say you are mine, once more assure me of a happiness I scarcely dare to credit, so great, so transcendent does it appear!”

“It is our destiny!” murmured Julia, sinking powerless into the arms of the magnetiser.

* * * * *

* * * *

“Not at home? — nonsense!” said the Honorable Mr. Wigman, the Duchess’s first cousin, and one of her grace’s most perti-

nacious adorers—"I am sure she will be at home to me—I have something most particular to say to her---In fact I---I must and wi---will see her."

"Very well, sir," said the footman, "I will go and see if she is at home to you."

"Yes g---go and se---see," stammered the obstinate Wigman, who amongst other extraordinary illusions, cherished the firm conviction that his cousin was most desperately in love with his ungainly personality. He had in fact fixed upon this identical day for the ceremony of laying at her feet his heart and fortune, (which latter two straight lines might very conveniently enclosed) and having once, as he expressed himself, (he was a director in thirty seven companies—and a shareholder in seventy more) 'got the steam up' for the occasion, felt very much disinclined to forego his intention.

So full indeed was the would be M. P. for Wilsdown of his audacious project, and so

destitute of tact and natural good breeding was his character, that he actually followed upon the heels of the footman up stairs, and scarcely had that worthy sagaciously given notice of his presence by tapping at the door of the duchess of Villersden's boudoir, than the Honourable stood, in all his ugliness before the astonished eyes of Lord Wilsdown and his cousin.

Notwithstanding the familiar terms upon which she had lived with her cousin, Julia's indignation at this insolent intrusion, overpowered every feeling of embarrassment without seeming to notice Wigman, who had commenced some stammering apology; she turned with sparkling eyes to the terrified servant, and said severely—

“ I thought I told you that I was at home to no one ? ”

“ So I told Mr. Wigman, your grace, but he would persist in coming up.”

“ I—I—had—no i—idea—that you were so

pup—pup—pressingly engaged,” said Wigman malignantly, backing towards the door.

Meanwhile, speechless with rage, Biron glanced from the dishevelled ringlets of the duchess, to the vulgar and ill-favored cub before them. Of all men perhaps Wigman was to him the most obnoxious; he had, Biron knew, attempted to black-ball him at one, of the clubs; a hundred times the insignificant little wretch had annoyed him by his odious and uncalled for interruption of his conversation with the duchess at balls and dinner-parties, and on many other occasions provoked his most unforgiving detestation. And now this *petit monstre*, this monkey scarcely have developed into man,* dared in his presence, impudently to intrude upon and insult the woman he for the time adored beyond all other existences. Mesmer did not

* See The Vestiges of Creation.

stay to reflect upon consequences, with eyes flashing scorn and vengeance, he sprang upon the hapless Wigman, seized him by the middle and despite his struggles, whirled him high in the air—luckily for the Honourable, the window did not happen to be open—and literally kicked him to the extreme end of the adjoining saloon, where he fell amid the congenial crash of a pile of china monstrosities, which his fall shivered into ten thousand fragments. Frightened almost into fits, though physically but slightly damaged, Wigman contrived to escape from the room, and to roll down the staircase into the street, where his extraordinary appearance attracted no little ridicule and attention from the amazed passengers. He heeded not their gibes nor their surprise, but rushing madly on, in horrified bewilderment, *ventre a terre* checked not his swift pace till he fell breathless and exhausted upon the threshold of Freybourg's cigar chop in Pall Mall, in which

in his confusion he had mistaken for the door of the Athenæum club-house.

* * * * *

Two days afterwards, it was known that a duel had been fought between Lord Wilsdown and the Honorable Mr. Wigman, and that the latter had been seriously wounded.

Amputation above the knee followed, and a cork leg was ordered upon credit from the manufacturer of those ingenious appendages. Wigman subsequently became remarkable for his adherence to minutest points of punctilio and etiquette, which plainly shews the advantage of being chastised by Providence in due and fitting season.

CHAPTER XX

THE VALET.

WHEN servants imagine that their masters cannot do without them, they are apt to grow exceedingly consequential and impertinent; thus we not unfrequently find elderly gentlemen and ladies, and especially bachelors and old maids, all but the slave of their own "slavies;" from long habit, that second nature of mortals, aversion to change and the dread of not easily

finding fresh attendant spirits, who might accommodate themselves to their ways, peculiarities, and eccentricities, confident in the influence they have acquired and established; these ancient domestics frequently presume most outrageously upon the easy, good temper of their masters and mistresses, even to the extent of disputing their commands, intruding, unasked, advice, and openly criticising their actions.

Enlightened by experience, they regard a *month's warning* with sovereign contempt, and scarcely deign to notice the perhaps often repeated threat of summary dismissal, well knowing that but a slight apology is generally sufficient to reinstate them in all their former position.

Now, although we should sincerely rejoice to see the time when menial service with all its petty annoyances, may be almost if not totally dispensed with, by the substitution of innumerable ingenious improvements in domestic ma-

chinery, a climax by no means so difficult of attainment as may at first sight be imagined, we can well understand and respect this weakness towards old and attached retainers of a family who often, as in the Master of Ravenswood's hoary butler in Scott's well known 'Bride of Lammermoor,' completely merge their own individual pride and feelings in the honor of their lords and ladies.

Far different, however, is the case when the presumption of the servitor is founded upon the ill-judged familiarity of the highest powers, such as, not to mention the excessive imprudence of delaying the payment of their wages, any confidence between a lady and her maid, or a gentleman and his valet or tiger, in matters of finance, still worse of love, and worst of all love where the gratification of the passions is not founded upon the precise maintenance of the ten commandments, delivered to Moses from the Mount of *Sinai* or the moral

code acknowledged by the present sinful generation.

Now Mesmer, though with secret misgivings, had been necessitated, in affairs of this kind, to confide most alarmingly in the discretion of his acute valet Sago ; and even in other and more dangerous adventures to place himself considerably in the power of that trusty personage. Sago had also kept his eyes open to a much wider extent than his machiavellian master was aware of, who, absorbed in a multitude of desperate and complicated schemes, occasionally released, unconsciously, the habitual caution of his behaviour towards his more subordinate agents. The worthy factotum had consequently imbibed, in addition to his actual knowledge of facts, a variety of shrewd suspicions, amounting almost to certainties, as to the Right Honorable Baron of Wilsdown's conduct and proceedings.

The valet at length imagined that he was

getting the upper hand, gave himself airs, infringed his master's order in things of minor importance, and on the Count's reprimanding him, scowled, looked black, and turned sulky with very dignified independence. Nevertheless he had hitherto stood too much in awe of his master to venture on even the slightest verbal insolence, or retort, till one morning, shortly after the day on which the duel between Biron and Wigman occurred, the following scene took place in the dressing room of the former.

"Sago," said Mesmer, "where the devil are those boots with the red morocco tops?"

"What boots, my lord?" said the valet.

"Those with the red morocco tops," replied Biron, "those that you have given me are too small," and so saying, the young peer, who was in a very irritable mood, on account of his pecuniary difficulties, whirled the ill fitting specimen of Hoby's genius to the other end of the apartment, and in so doing, destroyed

a magnificent *Psyche*, which accident tended by no means to soften his ill humour.

“Where are the boots, you rascal,” reiterated Mesmer, with increasing ire.

“I don’t remember any boots with red morocco tops,” said Sago, doggedly, “and I am not a rascal, whatever some people ——”

The remainder of the valet’s reply was lost in muttered indistinctness.

“What is that you are saying,” said Lord Wilsdown, in a furious passion, catching up a boot jack, and raising it with a threatening air.

“My Lord, from this instant I quit your service,” said Sago, looking with brazen assurance at his master.

“Nonsense,” said Biron, suddenly sobered by this unexpected climax, my nerves are out of order this morning.—I was hasty—get me the boots at once, and do not let this occur again.”

"I don't know what boots your lordship means," said Sago, insolently.

"Come, come," said Biron, with a good humored smile, "the *ne plus ultra* of successful affectation, you make too free with my wardrobe Sag, I cannot afford a new pair of boots every day."

"H—m," said the valet, half aloud, "I do not see why not, since they are never paid for."

"That is the bootmaker's affair," said Mesmer, then continued in a tone intended to check further familiarity, "but enough of this, bring me my boots and help me on with my coat, I must go out immediately."

"Perhaps my lord before you go," said Sago, submissively, without, however, making any movement towards fulfilling the commands of our adventurer, "you will have the kindness to pay me my wages and ——"

"Pooh," said Lord Wilsdown, "you ungrateful dog, have I not doubled your pay, and

allowed you every possible indulgence, where will you find another master like me?"

"I never before was accused of dishonesty!" said Sago, with an air of virtuous indignation.

"Nor are you now, my good fellow," said Biron, conciliatingly, "so set your mind easy on that head, and do not be such a fool to your own interest as to leave a place where you are better off than you can possibly be anywhere else, besides I have not done half for you that I intend."

"Oh! certainly, my lord," said Sago, still more submissively, and beginning to dust a coat which he took from a wardrobe; "if your lordship will double my present wages, I have not the slightest objection to stay."

Scarcely had the valet come to the pith and marrow of this most impudent demand, than the count, with every appearance of renewed passion, burst out with,

"You exorbitant, avaricious scoundrel!"

At the same moment, hurling the boot-jack

at the audacious delinquent, who, narrowly escaping a broken head, vanished with the rapidity of lightning, from the apartment.

Should the reader, however, imagine that this last *coup* was a genuine ebullition of passion on the part of our hero, he is egregiously mistaken—for having perfectly recovered his self-command the instant that Sago threatened to leave him, every subsequent word he had uttered, was the result of deliberate calculation, even the violence of the finale, was executed in perfectly cool blood. Seeing clearly, that if once yielded to, there would be no limit to the audacity of the valet's extortions; Mesmer at once, came to the conclusion, that with such a creature, the boldest course was the safest, and determined, by showing that he was not to be trifled with, effectually to conclude the business.

Not for a moment did he suspect that Sago would really put his threat into execution.

“He must see,” thought Mesmer, “that it is against his interest to quit so liberal a master ; and by his interests, he will, of course, be guided.”

It is one of the common mistakes of worldly men ; and our hero shared the error greatly—to underrate the sensibilities, likings, dislikings, and passions, amongst the inferior grades of society ; and to imagine that at all times, pecuniary interest is, with them, the predominating motive — often, this is, indeed, the case—however, there are frequent exceptions to the rule.

Sago had, for some time past, felt uneasy at the nature of many proceedings he was compelled to assist in ; he began to suspect too, far greater atrocities than those in which he was implicated, and some fears for his personal security, added to a slight stirring of latent, conscientious feeling, caused him to long for freedom from the mysterious web, in the weaving of which, he half blindly assisted.

Twenty minutes had elapsed, and Lord Wilsdown rang his bell, not doubting that but Sago would, as usual, answer its summons, and the storm blow over without further trouble. He was mistaken. The valet had already departed.

CHAPTER XX.

THE UNREPENTANT.

THE carriage of Lord Wilsdown rattled swiftly up to the door of Prince de Rosenberg's house in Park-lane, and the footman springing nimbly to the ground, produced a roll of thunder from the knocker, that would have done credit to a by-stroke of the cloud compelling *Zeus*. The door was opened, and our adventurer shown once more into the library of Aurelius.

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"Be seated, my lord," said the prince, in a tone of calm dignity, pointing to a chair precisely opposite to that in which he himself was seated "you received my note?"

"I did," replied Biron, in stern and measured accents; "and must confess myself at a loss to conjecture for what purpose, after all that has passed, your Highness should have so specially desired this interview."

"With no mere object of personal gratification, you may imagine," resumed Aurelius, "no, whatever you may think to the contrary, to insure the welfare of another inexpressibly dear to me, and even of yourself, was my only motive for requesting this meeting."

"Your Highness," said Mesmer, with cold and studied politeness; "I am prepared to hear with patience, and to weigh dispassionately, anything you may have to say or propose; though I can scarcely conceive, what interest you can take in my welfare."

"No," replied Aurelius, "the injurer but

rarely forgives ; and with difficulty believes, that the injured can do ought than reciprocate his hatred."

"The meaning of your Highness's last observation," said Biron, "is a little obscure ; in the eyes of all the world, *you* are the injuring, and *I* the injured party."

"Possibly, but not in the eyes of our own consciences," said Aurelius, firmly.

"And you are mistaken," continued Biron, "if you suppose that I cherish any vindictive feelings. Though not pretending to your highness's profundity, I, too, have dabbled a little in the study of practical, moral philosophy ; you seduced my wife, reflection showed me that the love of a woman who is false is unworthy of regret. Lady Wilsdown and I did not assimilate ; we were unfitted for one another ; in short, I am now persuaded, that she was not the woman destined to secure my permanent happiness ; my wish, therefore, was to be released from this ill-chosen connexion with

all convenient speed, in order to try a new experiment in the lottery of love, with a hope of forming a more suitable and agreeable alliance. A divorce obtained, I care not how soon Augusta Biron becomes Princess de Rosenberg."

"I could admire the liberality of your sentiments, were I less perfectly acquainted with their motives, but that is not now the question; my object in sending for you to day, is to tell you that I possess a complete key to your conduct; that I am acquainted with every atrocity you have perpetrated within the last few years—in fine, that I am fully informed of every fact relating to yourself and your actions, which you are most desirous of concealing."

"Be kind enough to answer your own enigmas," said Biron, with inimitable coolness, and a stare of astonished credulity.

"In the first place then," said the prince, "I have ascertained that you were not in Devonshire at the time you asserted, but that, on the contrary, there is strong presumptive evidence

of your having been in Paris at that period, under a false name and in disguise; on the importance of this discovery, I make no comments.

Biron made no reply, but by an expressive, upward glance, strove plainly to express his conviction that the prince had either taken leave of his senses or was possessed by the devil; by a slight shake of the head, he also implied the fruitlessness of attempting to reason with, or exhibiting anger towards an individual with so unfortunate a deranged organism. In reality, he thought it wisest to hear patiently all the prince had to say, in order clearly to arrive at the extent of Aurelius's information, and the dangers by which he himself was immediately threatened.

"Secondly," resumed de Rosenberg, without paying much attention to the above display of our hero's histrionic talents; "I have proofs that the foil used in your combat with Lord Granville, was previously prepared for the occa-

sion ; that, consequently, you were guilty of his deliberate and premeditated murder."

"Go on!" said Biron.

"Thirdly, Adolphus Cashall died within ten minutes after receiving a letter which you wrote him, signed with an assumed name.

"Pray proceed, your Highness, it is positively quite amusing."

"Lastly, by a conspiracy of the basest, and most infamous description, you attempted to ruin the reputation of a virtuous wife, whose only crime, was a devotion to one so lost to every sense of honour, justice, and virtue, as yourself."

"Cannot the exuberant imagination of your Highness, add a few more items to the catalogue," said the impostor, with a laugh.

To enumerate such trifles in comparison to the enormity of the crimes I have already charged you with, would be useless, or I might allude to the immense sums of which you have robbed Lord Friskerton, myself, and hundreds

of others in every possible way, but I should not omit to mention that I am acquainted with the whole scheme, by means of which you succeeded in breaking the banks of the gambling houses, in Paris, and several of the most fashionable German watering places; and the fate of the unfortunate clairvoyant to whose assistance you owed your success is but too evident.

“I scarcely know,” said Mesmer, “what to reply to this tissue of insanity, did you merely wish to insult me, you would scarcely have adopted so roundabout a course of proceeding, I can therefore only regard you as the victim of some unfortunate delusion: will your Highness still further favor me by informing me of your object in making these unheard of communications.

“Man,” exclaimed Aurelius, “it is fearful to see you so utterly dead to every sensation of remorse or contrition, but I will not yet give up all hope. Steeped as you are in crime, and

on reflection I am unacquainted, perhaps, of the tide of your evil deeds ; you did not create yourself, you did not make your disposition your organism, such as it is. The germs of human thoughts and action like all other entities have existed from eternity, he who studies nature and causation, desires neither blood nor punishment, acknowledges neither merit nor desert, but regard each thing simply with reference to its capacities for producing and increasing happiness, the vital principle of the universe, the criminal is not crushed to satiate the thirst of vengeance, but to remove a noxious cancer from society, to prevent the commission of fresh crimes in his own person, and by example to deter others from a similar course, thus improving the general tone of morality, and consequently happiness of mankind, but could the same ends be obtained by reforming, instead of punishing, how far more glorious a triumph for the cause of benevolence and virtue ! The past is irrevocable, neither your

death nor your remorse can efface from the page of time the horrors you have perpetrated, yet even, great as they are they may be atoned for; aye more than atoned for by reformation, and a life henceforward spent in benefitting your fellow creatures as unremittingly as you have hitherto persecuted them; I now offer you the choice between repairing, to the utmost in your power, the injuries you have inflicted on those yet surviving to receive compensation, and a secure retreat into some foreign country, where you may reside uninterfered with, and free from molestation, so long as you are guilty of no fresh outrage against your race, on the other hand ——”

“ Well,” said Mesmer, whom the imminence of his peril only served to inspire with more desperate audacity, what, if I regard your presumptuous proposition with all the contempt such ridiculous falsehood and childish drivelling of moral cant alone deserves.

“ Then” said Aurelius sternly, “ I deliver

you into the hands of justice, and you yourself know best, what hope of escape would remain for you."

"Now hear me," said Lord Wilsdown, utterly unmoved by this last startling announcement, "whatever have been my deeds, were they as spotless and innocent as you imagine your own to be, or, in your own language, ten times more criminal and infamous than you have represented; I have acted upon a system which, if less attractive, and ostentatious than the sublime philanthropy you profess has, at least, the advantage of unswerving consistency in its favour; you seek for an objective happiness in regarding yourself as an instrument for the benefit and amelioration of mankind. I sought a purely subjective felicity by regarding all mankind as the mere tools or victims of my pleasure, how in the microcosm of self am I to separate the ideal from the real, the shadow from the substance, the effect from the cause;

how in fine am I to divide the internal from the external existence, or to know that those things which I perceive exist elsewhere than in the constitution of my own mind, and even allowing them to exist—what motive should induce me to prefer their enjoyment to my own, or to sympathise for a moment with their pleasures, or their sufferings *cogito ergo sum*,” said Descartes, “I think therefore I am, in my own being concentrates my whole existence, from my own consciousness of being radiates my conception of the universe.”

“Is it possible that no spark of regret for your past actions, no vestige of justice or benevolence can leaven this fiend like and stupendous egotism,” exclaimed the Prince, gazing with painful anxiety on the dark and inscrutable being before him.

“I have explained my system,” said Mesmer laconically.

“Infinite powers!” said Aurelius, “that such a

person, such talents and intellects should have been bestowed, and not one moral impulse given to restrain and guide them; repent before it is too late."

As when the guest of stone vainly appealed to the impious and inflexible Spaniard—as when the ambassador of heaven fruitlessly addressed his message to the rebellious angels, impervious in the pride of fallen dignity; thus Mesmer the Impostor, the Man without a conscience, the hero of a thousand crimes, replied with fearless scorn to the adjuration of Aurelius—"NEVER."

"One moment pause, reflect."

"Never!" again retorted Mesmer.

The countenance of Aurelius would have well served as a model for that of the divine prophet of Judah, when on the mountain's summit, at once denouncing and lamenting the fall of the great capital, and the magnificent though polluted temple; so sublime was the

expression of pitying sorrow pervading his regular and dignified features.

“To the safety of the many, the individual must be sacrificed,” said he with sad resolution.

“I will go,” said Mesmer, suddenly rising.

“It is too late,” said the Prince.

“How so?”

“The police are at hand ready to seize your person.”

“Then I will save them the trouble,” said Mesmer, drawing a small phial from his pocket, “this bottles contains prussic acid.”

“It is well,” said Aurelius firmly, “better to die so than—”

“Perish like a Sheppard or a Greenacre,” completed Mesmer with a smile, “such was never my destiny.”

At this moment a carriage stopped at the door, it contained Merlmore, Colonel Rossmill and the attorney Monville, They entered the library together.

Monville started at the sight of Biron and kept cautiously behind his companions.

“ Still more discoveries,” said Merlmore to the prince. “ A girl, who it seems has been for some considerable time past kept a prisoner at Wilsdown, has escaped from the castle, begged her way to London, and communicated to us some most extraordinary circumstances.”

“ Her name?” said Mesmer.

“ Clara Gordon,” replied Merlmore.

“ I thought so,” said Biron, looking at his watch, and deliberately uncorking the poison.

“ And stranger still,” said Monville in a low voice to the prince, “ a pocket book has been found in the drawer of a dressing-table, at the *Hotel du Diable*, Paris, which conclusively proves, from a half written letter it contains, the identity of Lord Wilsdown with the disguised gambler, and of his companion the unfortunate Theodore Ramsay, of whose murder there can no longer remain the slightest question.”

“On that head,” said the prince, “I have just obtained some remarkable revelations,” and Aurelius ringing the bell desired Mr. Sago to be sent to him.

Meanwhile, Merlmore briefly detailed the history of our adventurer’s origin, and the supposed destruction of the miser’s will, of which a copy it appears was still extant.

“It is even suspected,” thrust in Monville officiously, “that the days of the old man were unnaturally shortened.”

“Miserable cur,” exclaimed Mesmer with fierce contempt, abruptly advancing, and thus getting at least two yards nearer to the door, whilst he felt in his bosom for a brace of pistols of wonderfully delicate and minute manufacture, which he invariably carried about with him in order to be prepared for emergencies like the present—“You think to realize the fable of the cowardly ass kicking the fallen lion; you will find yourself mistaken. In this paper,” and Mesmer produced a letter carefully

sealed and addressed to Colonel Rossmill, "is contained a full account of Mr. Monville's paltry rascalities, and the proofs necessary to substantiate them."

"You surely will not credit," began Monville.

"Pshaw!" said Colonel Rossmill interrupting his protestation of innocence, "that will be a matter for after consideration."

"Yes," said Mesmer, "when I am in my grave you will do me justice, and perhaps do justice to yonder pettyfogger also; but it is not worth while to waste words upon such refuse—ah!" continued he, as at this crisis Sago entered the room, "you have brought my discarded valet to give evidence against me, a most credible witness truly, I did not expect this of you, Prince!"

Sago, at the command of Aurelius, deposed to the facts of Biron's magnetizing Ramsay, and the peculiar arrangements which

he had assisted in making for the experiments with cards.

To Merlmore and Colonel Rossmill no further explanation was necessary, by a look simultaneously exchanged with Aurelius, they showed that the whole mystery was unravelled to them.

Sago then began to communicate a variety of other facts relative to his master's conduct, especially with reference to the death of Lord Granville, Cashall, and the evidence adduced against Augusta, when a violent knock at the door turned the attention of the company in an entirely new direction.

"It is yet time," whispered Aurelius.

Biron shook his head resolutely.

A smile of triumph illuminated the countenance of the impostor; "at length," he murmured, as his ears caught the sound of a furious voice outside—

"Your health, Prince," said he, aloud.
"Colonel, I leave you my skull as a legacy,"

And putting the phial of poison to his lips, he convulsively imbibed its contents ; a terrible change came over his features ; his whole frame quivered for a moment, as if from the effect of the most painful spasms, and with a suppressed groan, he fell heavily to the ground !

“ He is dead !” exclaimed the prince.

“ Dead !” echoed his companions.

At this moment, the door was thrown open with tremendous violence, and Guy Merlmore, the madman, burst wildly into the room.

“ It is the hour !” he shouted, with ferocious exultation ; “ I am to find him here. The magician Fracabas, has sworn it ! Where is he ? where is Monville ? Answer me, Melchisidec !” thundered the lunatic, seizing Colonel Rosmill by the collar. “ Ah ! I see the reptile !”

And darting upon the attorney, who was endeavouring to creep under the table, in a cold agony of trepidation ; with Herculean force he

tore him from the ground, and before any one could interfere in his behalf, had dashed the unfortunate wretch through one of the windows, with such irresistible violence, that his body, impaled upon the spikes of the railings in front of the house, writhed in the most fearful torture.

For some minutes, the policemen, who were waiting outside to arrest Biron, were unable to release Monville from his painful position, on account of the violence with which he kicked and struggled ; when the Prince, Colonel Rosmill, Merlmore and Sago, rushing out in horror-struck excitement, reached the street, they found him lying senseless upon the pavement ; he was immediately taken into the house, and the best medical attendance procured. In order to avoid recurrence to this subject, we may as well state, that after enduring the most excruciating pain, Monville expired the same evening, having first received the sacrament, and confessed to a long list of iniquities of the most heinous description.

In this world he deserved his fate ; his repentance, if genuine, may insure his welfare in the next.

Meanwhile, on returning to the library they found that the madman had disappeared, and that the corpse of the impostor was no where to be found.

" We have been laughed at !" exclaimed Aurelius, " he has escaped ; but I see the police are in pursuit."

" He cannot have gone far !" exclaimed Merlmore, rushing into the street.

" I shall never get a cast of his head," growled the phrenologist, hastily following his example.

" I hardly know," thought the prince, musingly ; " whether I most desire his capture or his escape—such specimens are unique studies of human nature."

" He would give old Harry fifty out of a hundred, and beat him by five-and-forty," muttered Sago, as he joined in the pursuit ; " they'll

never catch him—master's a match for all the policemen in the universe, squared and cubed on the most algebraic principles."

Whilst the valet indulged in the above arithmetical reflections, the police were, indeed, in pursuit of the wrong man—that is, of Guy Merlmore, the maniac, who, having rushed from the house a moment previous to our adventurer, coursed rapidly along the streets with the whole rabble of pursuers behind him. Biron having quietly entered a shop with double entrance, had effected a convenient escape in one of Hanson's Patent safety conveyances.

They ultimately succeeded in recapturing the lunatic, but the most remarkable occurrence that happened during the chase was an accident which occurred to two ladies in a fly, the horse of which taking fright at the passing apparition of the madman, dashed furiously down an area, displacing the railings in his course, plunged his head through the kitchen window, and

managed to get his hinder legs into a water butt; the ladies escaped without injury, and the horse was led out of the hall door by a powdered footman, apparently in a perfect state of bodily preservation.

CHAPTER XXII.

WILD THOUGHTS AND DEEDS.

LATE in the night a solitary horseman, covered with dust, spurred up to the ancient portal of Wilsdown. The drowsy porter gazed with astonishment at his master, as in sombre silence, he rode through the gate. The noble steed, however, being completely exhausted, dropped down dead before they were half way up the avenue, and Biron proceeded on foot towards the castle. There, without, disturbing the

repose of any of the servants, he unlocked a small postern, and having lighted a lamp of silver, from some lucifers he carried in his pocket, stepped gently along a broad corridor, and with the silence of death ascended the wide staircase. The frescos and statues looked spectral, and lifelike, as the faint gleam of the lamp fell upon their faces in passing, and the dark silent form of Lord Wilsdown himself seemed to glide through the night like a wandering shadow from the grave-yard. He stopped at the door of one of the bedrooms, and cautiously entering the apartment advanced on tip toe to the bed side of the occupant.

What is there in nature, or imagination, more beautiful than the calm repose of female loveliness, more reminding us of the divine purity of celestial essences than a fair and gentle girl in the deep sleep of youthful health—who that hath gazed upon such a picture, feels not the weakness and inadequacy of sculpture to pourtray ideal woman—the perfection of

creation's works. Silent and pensive Mesmer regarded, for a time, the countenance of Giulietta Neldoni—more intent grew his look, and he made some slow passes with his hands, at the distance of a few inches from the coverlid, towards her feet. A gradual change came over her features, and in a few minutes the state of normal sleep in which she had originally lain, was deepened into a profound magnetic trance, and her eyes opened with that peculiar, deathlike expression, we have more than once had occasion to allude to.

“Giulietta, are you awake?”

“Yes!”

“I wish you to think deeply!”

“I will try—you wish me to think of yourself?”

“I do?”

“You are threatened with danger!”

“Immediate?”

“No—not immediate.”

“What do you see?”

“I see”—responded the *clair voyante*, after a pause, and speaking with difficulty in slow, yet certain accents, “I see men entering the house and asking for you?”

“Proceed! and I?”

“You are gone—far, far, away.”

“What is the hour?”

“It is—a quarter past five!”

“What hour?”

“A quarter past five!”

“You are sure?”

“Sure—why do you doubt me!”

“I do not doubt you,” said Biron, soothingly, “now sleep for ten minutes, and then awake.”

The somnambulist fell back upon her pillow, and at the end of the time specified returned from the magnetic to the natural sleep, when she was awakened by Mesmer.

“Well Giulietta!”

“Oh! you are returned at last—how glad I

am to see you," exclaimed the Italian, embracing her mysterious lover.

"Tell me your dreams?"

"Oh! so strange!—I thought the rain was pouring down in torrents, and heard it distinctly beating against the window—do look out and see if it really is so?"

"I have but just arrived—not a drop of rain has fallen—the dust was intolerable."

Mesmer advanced to the casement, and drew aside the curtains—the sky had suddenly become dark, lowering, and in another moment a terrific storm had burst, bright flashes of lightning irradiated every part of the heavens, and the roar of the thunder seemed to shake the very foundations of the castle.

"It is now three o'clock, said Biron, looking at his time-piece—you have an hour for preparation Giulietta—dress yourself, put up a few things in a bundle, not too heavy for you to carry in your hand, and come to me in the black chamber.

“But what is the meaning---?”

“Ask no questions, time is precious—if you love me, obey at once—hereafter all shall be explained.” And Biron quitted the room.

The black chamber was his own especial sanctum; arrived there, he seated himself at a desk, and wrote, with great rapidity, several letters, which he carefully sealed and directed; he then looked over some papers in a large pocket book, and having apparently satisfied himself that none were missing, placed them securely in the breast pocket of his coat, and deliberately proceeded to examine and load a brace of pistols of the finest and most ornamental workmanship.

“By this time those boxes must be at Bristol,” muttered the impostor. I think all has been cared for—what remains to be done is quickly accomplished.”

And the adventurer gazed with a sombre expression upon the raging of the tempest without, whilst vision-like reminiscences of

his past existence, coursed meteor-like through the gloom of his soul.

“Almost,” he exclaimed, whilst more than mortal despair darkened the pale beauty of his features, “Almost might I be tempted to believe in the cant of religion, and the solemn saws of the moralists—and deem it possible that I have taken the unwise course, that my bold and triumphant career has been but a brilliant madness! Alas what is life without hope—and I *hoped*—to live for the life of man in ceaseless enjoyment, and unflagging excitement. But how little did I anticipate the present icy hell that freezes and darkens my being!

“Men I despise—for even me, their habitual meanness, avarice and stupid hypocrisy, ineffably disgusts. Cowardly pigmies! whose littleness of soul, is alike incapable of the lofty brightness of philosophy and virtue, and the sublime darkness of great and daring crime. Grovelling worms! plodding onwards in their filth, ignorant alike of their natures and the

true objects of their existence—and yet *these* arrogate to themselves the first rank in creation, call themselves the especial care of the Eternal and All-pervading spirit, and boast that the sun's glorious orb was made alone to light their sordid toils. What sympathy can I feel with such as these—or am I some ill-fated demon cased in the form of man, as punishment for deeds in other worlds. Have I not ransacked the stores of science, thought and imagination, am I not satiated with every most exquisite delight of the senses—what now remains?—war, horror, and desolation. What avails me this perfection of outward form—this strength of limb—this energy of intellect—the command of wealth—the art to beguile—to charm—to rule mankind; when the soul has grown old within the youthful body, and at five and twenty the spirit is weary of existence. And Aurelius talked of reformation!—*reformation*—yes I *will* reform—utterly, spontaneously, for ever reform!—but it is not for living being to dictate to the son of Byron how or when

he shall fulfil his destiny. They think they have me in their power, that they have crushed me by their exertions and machinations—there has been no contest, they have but hastened my resolution.

* * * *

In less than the time appointed, la Signora entered the black chamber.

“ You are ready ?” said Mesmer.

“ Quite, where are we going ?”

“ We do not go together.”

“ Not together—what do you mean !” exclaimed Giulietta in dismay.

Biron’s explanation was brief but conclusive, he placed a rouleau of gold and a small pocket-book in the hands of the Italian, and having thrown a common plaid cloak over her shoulders conducted her, sobbing bitterly, to the door by which he had entered the castle.

“ Show this card to the porter, and he will

let you pass---the railway station is but a mile from hence---you will find the boxes I mentioned at Bristol---we meet in another world---farewell, Giulietta !”

The bewildered girl clung for some minutes to Lord Wilsdown with many passionate protestations of love and unchanging affection ; then tearing herself away, walked rapidly towards the gate of the park, whilst Mesmer noiselessly bent his steps towards the lower regions of the castle, still carrying the lamp in his hand to assist his progress.

At length he reached the cellar in which Valence the highwayman was confined, and having cautiously raised the trap-door called gently on his prisoner by name,

“ Who is there ?” exclaimed the robber starting from an uneasy slumber.

“ I,” replied Mesmer, “ I am come to set you at liberty.”

“ At liberty !” cried Valence, overwhelmed with joy at this unexpected good fortune, “ I

shall be for ever grateful to your lordship—but you are not mocking me?”

“Certainly not,” replied the lord of the castle, “I am about to get a ladder directly—but make no noise, and before you come up put on this suit of clothes and clean linen,’ our adventurer here threw the said garments down to Valence, “you will find in the pockets a hundred pounds,” continued Biron, “for I do not wish to send you naked into the world.”

When the highwayman had completed his toilette, Mesmer even whimsically insisting upon his perfuming himself and oiling and combing his hair, the latter proceeded to let down the ladder.

“But before I give you your freedom,” said Biron, “swear to me by all that is sacred, (as nothing was sacred to Biron, it is difficult to conceive what idea he associated with the above phrase,) to reform your life and morals, the folly of which must by this time be clear

to you, to the utmost of your power, and to lead a new and an honest life."

"I swear!" said Valence, and the rascal was ready to swear black was white, provided he were only released from limbo.

"Then come up," said Mesmer authoritatively.

In an instant the robber had scaled the ladder; he looked much thinner than of old, but spare diet had purified his blood, and improved his complexion. Biron's clothes fitted him now admirably, though somewhat tightly.

"Follow me," said Mesmer, "and in silence!"

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The sudden report of a pistol re-echoed through the castle, and roused all the domestics from their slumbers. Scarcely had a few of them huddled on their clothes and begun to

descend the staircase, than the gates reverberated beneath loud and repeated knocks, whilst the storm without resumed with tenfold violence.

CHAPTER XXII.

FIRE.

“GOOD God! he has killed himself!” exclaimed the first servant who entered the black chamber, recoiling in horror from the bloody spectacle that presented itself.

“He has committed suicide!”

“A case of *felo de se*,” said one of the constables who had just arrived to arrest him, “we heard the report without.”

“ His head is blown to atoms !” exclaimed another, “ not a feature is to be distinguished.”

“ The best thing he could do with himself,” muttered a third, “ he was a bad un, and no mistake !”

“ Why what had he done ?” cried the servants in chorus.

“ Murders, robberies, forgeries, perjury !” replied the constable; and the gaping domestics crowded round him to listen to the marvellous tale he had to disclose, whilst one only slunk away in order to profit by the opportunity, and pillage unobserved before it was too late.

Several of the young girls by this time had entered the room, and gazed with horror stricken astonishment upon the form of the dead man which rested upon a sofa in the attitude most favored by Mesmer whilst living. His right hand still grasped the instrument of death. He had left no sign or token behind him of any description. The window was open as if he had wished to gaze

for the last time upon the heavens and their starry host. In the confusion no one remarked that Giulietta Neldoni was alone absent.

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Suddenly, a shock like an earthquake was felt by the collected tenants of the black chamber, and before they had time to mark the pale fear gleaming from each other's countenances, a terrible explosion took place beneath them, and the tower containing that chamber was a ruin, all within it were destroyed; and blackened, or dismembered, corpses bestrewed the terrace and the garden. Some were thrown to the distance of nearly a hundred yards. Where now was the beauty that had ravished the senses, the voices, that had filled the air with their melody?

But it was fitting that the loves of the impostor should perish with him! better to die his victims, than live for future infamy!—Oh,

the mine of our hero was well contrived, and and the slow match hath bravely done its duty!

The solitary menial heard the noise and felt the shock of the explosion, a panic seized his soul, he dashed aside his booty, and fell upon his knees to pray, in fear and trembling. By degrees, he recovered sufficient courage to venture from his lurking place, and to behold the disastrous effects of the explosion. Cold sweat burst from his pores, he shouted aloud—no answer was returned, he searched the castle and found no living comrade.

“It is a judgment and a warning!” he exclaimed, and fled from the house of desolation a wiser and a sadder man.

He told his tale to the farmers in the neighbourhood. They all heaped curses upon the head of the deceased peer.

“He raised our rents!” cried a farmer.

“And lowered our wages!” growled the laborers.

“ He rode down our crops !”

“ And enforced the game laws !”

“ Our daughters have been debauched, and seduced from their homes !”

“ And now they are murdered !”

“ Let us burn the castle for vengeance !”
shouted an incendiary.

“ It will beat rick burning !”

“ Hurrah !—to the castle !”

Stragglers, aroused by the explosion join them—the storm had ceased—they rush tumultuously onwards --- some carry torches--- their countenances are inflamed with passion ---they resemble demons rather than men. The sun rises, but his rays cannot penetrate the black clouds that obscure the heavens.

The castle is fired---by degrees flame and smoke burst from the windows, at length a gigantic blaze darts from the roof towards the sky. Far and wide are heard the crackling of the oaken beams, and old carved panelling, relics of bye-gone centuries, a shower

of sparks descend upon the heads of the incendiaries, the number of spectators momentarily increased, and the menial's tale again and again retold.

* * * * *

Wonders of art and costly treasures lie buried beneath the fallen palace of luxury; but no one seeketh to drag them from their grave. There is a curse upon the castle of the impostor; never again shall it be inhabited. To this day Wilsdown is a desolate and moss-grown ruin. But the strangers who visit it, pause and converse in wondrous horror of the dark misdeeds and unparalleled crimes of the last lord of the castle.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FINALE.

THE fearful catastrophe described in the preceeding chapter, the manifold atrocities of the deceased peer, and the wonderful imposture he had carried on with such extraordinary and inconceivable success, formed almost the only topics of conversation amongst all classes of people. The newspapers teemed with the subject, sketches of his life and adventures appeared in every journal, whilst each day

under the auspices of the indefatigable penny a liners, prolifically brought forth, new marvels concerning our hero's career. Ridiculously exaggerated and utterly false as were many of the stories propagated, they yet fell short of the truth in many respects, and indeed, numerous discoveries of the most startling character were made upon investigating the affairs of the distinguished suicide. His estates were mortgaged to at least thrice their value. He had borrowed immense sums upon his mere personal security of the Jews, and on no security at all of all his friends—Lord Friskerton's debt was the largest in amount—he had defrauded whole hosts of tradesmen, of every description, to an almost fabulous extent. To no less than three publishers he had shewn the M S. of a work which never existed, (he did not allow them to read more than the first chapter) and induced them, from his great fashion and reputation, to advance considerable sums. To some of his creditors

he had even contrived to give cheques in exchange for cash which were never honored. But it were tedious to enumerate all his delusions practised upon goldsmiths, upholders, picture dealers, and a hundred more. Are they not written in the Times and Heralds of the day?—In round numbers, to form a rough estimate of his unprecedented depredations, his liabilities amounted to *above a million of money!*

Never before had a man without fortune, contrived to incur such prodigious debts. Yet, in “the last speech and dying confession,” hawked about the street, these were the least of his enormities. Meaner rogues were forgotten, and their names swept into oblivion, to make room for the immortal infamy accorded by universal acclamation, to the memory of (*par excellence*) the *man without a conscience*.

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We will now, after the manner of other his-

torians, before concluding our tale, glance briefly at the fate of the surviving characters who have figured in our wild, though we trust, not inconsistent drama. Sauguiary as may have appeared our pen in the last few chapters, we are not yet prepared to rival certain illustrious Frenchmen, who, at the conclusion of their romances, occasionally, seem scarcely awake to the vital necessity of leaving, at least, *one* man alive to tell the fate of his fellows.

A few days after the death of Lord Wilsdown—for by that title, was our adventurer still recognised—the Prince de Rosenberg called upon *Lady* Wilsdown—we leave the particulars of their interview to the imagination of the reader—in another year they were united in the bands of holy matrimony, in the same church which had witnessed the nuptials of the Imposter.

Years have rolled away, and little princes and princesses abound; but Aurelius still con-

tinues to perform miracles, and tries educational experiments upon his children with encouraging success. A lurking inclination to better and reform the world, disturbs his quiet to this very day; and, in spite of the sneers of the worldly, he is constantly engaged in numberless philanthropic schemes for the benefit of the human race—which, it is to be hoped, will signally prosper. Since he has been married, very few ladies have fallen in love with him, which delights him exceedingly—for he is too humane to take pleasure in their sufferings. Augusta is still a beauty, and the admired centre of a refined and literary circle.

Mr. Merlmore is quite at his ease; his wife is dead, and he has established himself with his daughter.

Colonel Rossmill still frequently laments not possessing a cast of our hero's phrenological development, and passes much of his time with Aurelius.

The Honourable Wigman lost his leg as we

have already mentioned. His second says that Biron fired before his time ; but this discovery was made after the death of the latter, and we have read the fable of the lion and the ass. However, everybody believes it ; and, perhaps, a crime more or less, does no great harm to the reputation of the departed.

Lord Friskerton finally married the Duchess of Villersden. By tacit consent, the name of Lord Wilsdown is never mentioned between them.

Clara Gordon died of consumption and grief, caused by the loss of her child.

Guy Merlmore in escaping from his pursuers, leapt from one of the bridges into the Thames, and strange to say, was completely restored to reason by the violence of the shock. After a serious illness he recovered, and meeting with Mrs. Bernard Tullamore, recognised in the fair widow, the object of his former passion.

He proposed, was accepted, and they are now

living at Florence in very excellent style. No return of his symptoms has appeared, nor hath he been heard to express regret for the destruction of Monville, the attorney, whose fate he looks upon as a just retribution, for the years of madness and suffering he had endured, through that unprincipled personage's agency.

Mr. and Mrs. Scales, though not afflicted with babies, are still happy in each others' society, and frequent guest of the Rosenbergs and the Friskertons.

Sago, the valet, received a letter from his late master, informing him that he had imbibed a slow poison, to which no antidote existed. The effects of the constant fear, thus excited upon his imagination, caused his death. He quoted Cato in his last moments.

AN ADDITIONAL CHAPTER.

THE RED KING.

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THE wild west windswept, uninterrupted, across the boundless plain, and the glorious disk of the sun sank calmly below the smooth and tree-less horizon, as a caravan of enterprising merchants traversed the vast rolling prairies in the far west of North America, on their road to California.

Extending in a long line for nearly a quarter of a mile, the caravan consisted of some dozen waggons, and about thrice the number of well-mounted horsemen, who dressed for the most part in white linen, on account of the heat, and armed with long rifles and bowie knives as a precaution against the Indians, presented a remarkably gay and gallant appearance.

“For my part,” said the elder, and stouter of a pair of travellers, who rode some paces in advance of the rest, “for my part I don’t believe half I hear, and I reckon that the *Red King* is no more a cannibal, than our president.

The comrade of the Yankee merchant was a very young man, strikingly handsome, but of a sombre and melancholy aspect, he bestrode a magnificent white horse, and his rifle was of the finest English manufacture. He, himself, was an Englishman, and the only one of the party who had no commercial interest in the success of the adventure.

"I have heard much," rejoined the youth, "of that wondrous personage, but would willingly learn more, if you will be kind enough to enlighten me."

"Little enough is known of him," replied the Yankee, it is now fifteen years or more since a great chief rose up amongst the Indians. That he is some renegade foreigner is certain, but whether Englishman, or Spaniard, American, or Frenchman, is still a question, and I guess no white man need calculate upon returning to tell us, who has once had the luck to fall into his clutches."

"Did you ever know any one who had seen this savage potentate?" enquired the stranger with interest.

"No," said the merchant, "not exactly, but I have heard that he is a fine looking man, and of gigantic stature, and strength. He was taken prisoner once on a marauding expedition, in Arkansas, and effected his escape in the most surprising maner, leaping over chasms of

inconceivable breadth, and swimming rivers, like a river horse. By degrees he has established his power, and a species of secret league amongst almost every tribe of Indians, whose hatred of the whites he has fomented to the highest pitch. Innumerable bloody battles have been fought on the frontier, and his military skill in disciplining, or rather in turning the want of discipline amongst the Indians, to account, is amazing! It seems as if he had suddenly given them national spirit, arms, tactics, and a leader. For my part, I do not believe all I hear, but they *say* he has been seen scouring the prairie on the back of a wild bison, and that he can cleave a strong man in twain by a single blow from his Damascus sabre. Of his wealth, the reports are, I reckon, exaggerated, but they *do* say that he has rebuilt one of the ruined cities in the country of the Snake Indians, and collected there many beautiful Mexican girls, and all the luxuries of civilization. However this is certain, he

has obtained a wonderful influence over the Shoshones, the Arriphaves the Comanches, the Crows, the flat heads, and even the more northern tribes of Indians, Black feet, and Chippeways, the Cree Indians, and many more. Gamblers and rogues of every kind from Texas, and the Western states, have joined him, and still continue to do so in great numbers; in short, he has laid the foundation of a new Indian Empire, and is called by all the world *The Red King*—and that's a fact!"

"And nothing is known of his origin?" inquired the stranger, at this triumphant conclusion of the Yankee Merchant's story.

"Nothing," replied his companion.

"It is very mysterious!" murmured the stranger.

"Not the only thing that is mysterious in the world," said the Yankee, remembering that all his cross-questioning had proved insufficient to penetrate the secret of his companion's destination (who had only joined the caravan

on the previous day), or indeed to ascertain anything relating either to his name, family objects, interests, or business in that quarter of the globe. And yet there was that in the young stranger's appearance and manners eminently calculated to excite curiosity, and the man by his side happened to be of an especially inquisitive nature.

"So you are not going to Monterrey?" recommenced the Yankee with the perseverance of a man who knew circumstances did not admit of his employing his time in any more profitable occupation.

"No!" replied the Englishman, giving him a black look, before which the other could not help quailing, "I am not going to Monterrey—I shall leave you within a few hours."

"Southward? I suppose," said the merchant.

The stranger shook his head, and appeared suddenly wrapped in the contemplation of some imperceptible object in the distance.

“ I wonder who the devil he is !” thought the Yankee, not the Red King himself, in disguise, I guess !—no he is too young. Yet there is something suspicious about his joining us as he did, and he has an uncommon fierce look, when he pleases, where can he be going I should like to know—something tarnation deep no doubt. Ah ! I’ve nailed it, he is one of the Red King’s emissaries from England ; I always thought England was at the bottom of the whole affair. Yes that’s it—hallo ! what have we here ?”

“ Indians !” responded the nearest of the troops examining the lock of his rifle.

In truth a band of about twenty Comanche cavaliers as they are termed, now came in view. A slight undulation of the ground had hitherto concealed them from the sight of the caravan.

“ We are double their number !” exclaimed the Yankee, “ they will scarcely venture to attack us.”

But the troop continued to bear down upon the caravan, until within some hundred yards of the travellers, when a shot from the rifle of the Indian leader laid the unfortunate merchant in the dust.

“I will avenge you!” shouted the young stranger, “his blood excited by the novelty of his situation, spurring his horse onwards in order to get a closer aim for his unpractised hand.

Meanwhile volleys had been exchanged on both sides, several Americans, and two Indians were wounded, and a most desperate hand to hand conflict had commenced. The Indian leader was a European, as his complexion plainly testified; wherever his red plume appeared, the sweep of his long sabre was fatal in its effects. Such was his prowess that no one for an instant doubted but that they saw before them the renowned hero of the West, the redoubtable *Red King* himself, and despite the inequality of numbers, and the valor of

the Americans, victory was at the least doubtful, when the English traveller having unhorsed the cavalier with whom he was engaged, rode up to the side of the far famed warrior, and lodged the contents of his rifle in his side.

The Red King instantly fell from his saddle, and the remaining Indians immediately seeing that all was lost, took to flight with the greatest agility.

Meanwhile the Englishman had sprung from his horse, and thrown himself by the side of the wounded chief—when lo! a strange phenomenon arrested the gaze of the by-standers. Never was seen a more striking resemblance than that of the stranger, to the dying man—the same lofty stature, the same magnificent forehead and large dark eyes, the same delicately chiselled nose and chin, the same peculiar curl of lip, the very frown was the same, and but that the Red King must have nearly reached his fortieth year, and the Englishman could have numbered little more than twenty,

and that the hair of the latter was a shade lighter, perhaps, and his skin fair as a princess's, whilst the countenance of the former was somewhat bronzed by the sun, it would have been difficult to have pointed out any distinctive difference in their features,

With increasing horror the stranger beheld this likeness of the Indian leader to himself, a vague fear awoke in his mind, and he stammered a trembling hope that the wound of the Chief might not prove serious.

“It is neither so deep as a well, nor so broad as a church door—but it will do—” said the Red King with a bitter sneer, fixing his eye upon a small and peculiar ring on the finger of his destroyer,—“boy, you go to meet your father?”

“I received a note—”

“I know all—you were brought up an orphan—you had fortune, friends, everything you need have desired ; but you were a bastard,

and you longed to know to whom you owed your being."

"True, true," muttered the stranger, gazing with increasing horror upon the wounded warrior.

"It is too late—your own accursed hand has deprived you of a father."

"Eternal God!—you are then——"

Mesmer de Biron, the bastard son of him who died for Greece—it is fitting that *I* should perish for the red men of the West.

"Oh horrible!" exclaimed the son of Clara, burying his face in his hands.

"Do you lament that you have discovered a father in one so infamous?"

"But Lord Wilsdown committed suicide?"

"No—simply another homicide, Valence, the robber performed my part on that occasion."

"Forgive me, father!" cried the unfortunate youth, pressing the cold hand of the dying Mesmer in his own.

“ My son, it is enough that I have seen you before I die, life has been rifled by me of its enjoyments, I am prepared for death. Farewell!”

For a long time the young stranger knelt with his eyes fixed wildly on the countenance of his father, so slight was the change that he could scarcely believe him dead, or conceive that from those matchless features had for ever faded the heavenly light of intelligence.

“ And to die by *my* hand, one, for whom he had so well and amply cared, whatever may have been his sins towards others, and to die suddenly and unrepenting. --- O misery immeasurable!”

It was night---the caravan was gone ; for they feared the return of the Indians, and the English stranger remained alone in darkness by the side of his father, and poured forth the anguish of his soul in the solitude of the boundless prairie.

And the Red King never returned to the

tribes, neither hath his corpse been found by any Indian ; and of the English Stranger, who slew him, were never afterwards heard tidings.

Whether they, one or both, perished in the wilderness, or returned to the haunts of men, or fled to distant countries, remains to this day a mystery.

And he who hath written these volumes is now silent---for his task is ended, and the pen is thrown aside, not destined perhaps to be resumed. Would that this parting were as painful to the reader as it is to the author.

THE END.

APPENDIX.

THE following brief accounts of phrenology, mesmerism, &c., are, it will be perceived, not addressed to those already deeply versed in the subject; but to such of our readers as accident may not have thrown in the way of enlarged works upon, or communicative students of the above sciences. There are many too, who, although without either patience or inclination to wade through a thick book, are not averse to the perusal of a brief treatise on matters which they perchance hold in derision, or at best regard with indifference.

Should we succeed in arousing but one incredulous mind to a sense of the importance and utility of their study, we shall not deem our labours altogether fruitless. Condensation and perspicuity will, in the following pages, be our principal aim, though, of course, the narrowness of our limits will not permit of extended detail. We shall first present an outline of the science of—

PHRENOLOGY.

Phrenology is that science which teaches the various functions of the different portions of the brain. These which were originally discovered by Dr. Gall are termed organs, and their outward or craniological development is vulgarly known by the name of *bumps*, a ridiculous nomenclature which leads to error in young beginners. It is to be supposed that the particles of brain constituting each organ possess certain chemical or other peculiarities adapting them to the particular sensations of which they are, as it were, the conductors or indices. How the mind becomes conscious of these operations we shall not now pause to examine, as it is by

far too extensive a subject to be casually spoken of, but at once pass on to the consideration of the uses to which phrenology may be applied, and the benefits to be derived from its application.

In the first place it renders us alive to the weaker points in our own characters, and puts us upon our guards against our own imperfections. Knowing ourselves to have a certain organ of redundant or deficient dimensions, we control its exaggerated exertion or systematically exercise it, as we do the muscles of our arms and legs by fencing, walking, &c., in order to increase and strengthen it. Thus, by degrees, a man born of a miserly disposition may convert himself to liberality. A coward become courageous, a vain man habitually modest, &c., with great advantage both to themselves and others. Slow and arduous are the steps to self knowledge—but to the wise, the page of nature is ever open.

A second use of phrenology is the clue it gives us to the nature and disposition of others. The advantages of which knowledge, in our private relations, and in matters of biography and history need no comments,

A third use to which this noble science may be employed is to guide men in their decision as to the future calling or profession of their children. We all know to what incalculable misery and misfortune, errors of parents on this important head have paved the way. Thus we have legislators, magistrates, students of medicine and law, deficient in reasoning powers, concentrativeness, firmness, and other requisite faculties; artists with small perceptive organs and inconsiderable comparison or ideality; clergymen without veneration; soldiers with negative combativeness; architects wanting constructiveness; merchants devoid of acquisitiveness; and many other anomalies, which, by the aid of phrenology, will, I trust, soon disappear from amongst us.

I shall now proceed to give a brief description of the human brain. The brain consists then, firstly, of the cerebrum or brain proper, which occupies the upper part of the interior of the skull, and the cerebellum or lesser brain below it, which is intimately connected with, and forms as it were the commencement of the spinal marrow, and is the

seat of sexual and muscular powers;* a discovery, for which we are indebted to my dear friend H. G. Atkinson, F. G. S., whose unwearied spirit of investigation in the domain of phrenology and the pathology of the nerves, together with his extraordinary mesmeric cures, effected with the purest philanthropic motives are well known to the medical and fashionable world.

And I take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to him for the advice and assistance he has kindly given to me in the phrenological and magnetic portion of these volumes, in hope that, ere long, he will favor the world with the results of his varied and deeply interesting studies, experiments, and discoveries in regions hitherto so insufficiently explored. Let him remember that the *novum prematur in annum* principle may be carried too far. *Nous verrons.*

The whole brain, greater and lesser, is further divided perpendicularly into two dis-

* The intimate relation borne by the muscular to the sexual organs, cannot be too deeply pondered by the medical practitioners, who often appear almost to lose sight altogether of this weighty fact.

inct halves or hemispheres,* each containing the same number of corresponding organs; whereof we append a correct list, for reference, to the *map* in the frontispiece, which, as will be perceived, shews only that portion of the head containing the brain. The little caricatures were sketched by me to illustrate the science of mnemonics or artificial memory, (otherwise termed phrenotypics, ideatypics

* On this ground Dr. Wigan founded his work on the duality of the mind, as I know to my cost; for a critic in the *Spectator*, having just reviewed the said book, wound up a critique upon Anti Coningsby, which immediately followed, by the strikingly logical conclusion that either the author (poor devil!) was—something, I forget what, at the moment—or *his mind was most assuredly in a dual state*, a Greek-grammar-like peculiarity, the critic seemed to forget, shared by the whole human race. But there was a deeper meaning concealed beneath this enigma than to a superficial reader would have been at first sight perceptible. The fact was the novel itself was *dual*—being in two very unorthodox volumes. Yet, ‘Specky is an honourable man’—I forgive him that and his other blunders (such as calling me a penny-a-liner!) from my heart, and wish all reviewers were as impartial!

I have received some curious hints from a scientific friend on the magnetic polarity of the two sides of the brain, and the existence of a negative and positive permeating fluid producing sensations, the number or strength of which should determine the extent of the perception, but the theory is as yet too much in its infancy to be seriously considered here.

with many other lengthy designations) and I think that the reader, having once compared the map with the following list, will find such facility in remembering the names and positions of the organs, that he will no longer doubt (presuming that he ever did so) the importance of *association and localization of ideas* as an aid to the recollection. Perhaps even whilst laughing at the apparently far-fetched absurdity of the means, he may upon other occasions find the advantage of connecting a thing to be remembered with images derived from more than one sense, in the imagination.

THE ORGANS OF THE BRAIN.

FEELINGS.

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Amativeness. | 11. Love of Approba- |
| 2. Philoprogenitive- | tion. |
| ness. | 12. Cautiousness. |
| 3. Concentrative- | 13. Benevolence. |
| ness. | 14. Veneration. |
| 4. Adhesiveness. | 15. Firmness. |
| 5. Combativeness. | 16. Conscientiousness |
| 6. Destructiveness. | 17. Hope. |
| 7. Secretiveness. | 18. Wonder. |
| 8. Acquisitiveness. | 19. Ideality. |
| 9. Constructiveness. | 20. Wit. |
| 10. Self-Esteem. | 21. Imitation. |

INTELLECTUAL FACULTIES.

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| 22. Individuality. | 29. Order. |
| 23. Form. | 30. Eventuality. |
| 24. Size. | 31. Time. |
| 25. Weight. | 32. Tune. |
| 26. Colouring. | 33. Language. |
| 27. Locality. | 34. Comparison. |
| 28. Number. | 35. Causality. |
36. Gustotiveness, marked by a *cross* on the
older phrenological casts.

Before concluding this treatise, we would warn the young phrenological student of the absolute necessity of great care and practice in the examination of heads. The extreme length is generally measured with a piece of tape, from the organ of Individuality to that of Philoprogenitiveness inclusive, and twenty-two to twenty-three inches are considered most advantageous. We would also warn him in judging of a character, by no means to be too hasty in deciding that phrenology is wrong because—"Mr. or Mrs. Somebody is positively so very benevolent or so very destructive!" Let him weigh the matter deliberately; if possible, by a re-examination, endeavour to discover whether he has not miscalculated the size or locality of an organ,

what other developments counterbalance the effects of those above mentioned, and how far his previous estimate of the individual in question is consistent with his words and actions; an analysis too often utterly neglected. The general temperament is a matter also of importance. The following will be found in every variety of combination, one or other however generally predominating.

Nervous, active.

Bilious, power of enduring.

Sanguine, impulsive, excitable.

Lymphatic, tending to inactivity and dullness.

But our space is limited, and our outlines of science require much shading by more practised hands. We should not have attempted in the narrow limits of an appendix to a work of fiction, even the light task we have undertaken but that it is our intention to send these few pages into the world, at the same time in a cheaper and perhaps more appropriate form in the hope that they may prove the porch to a temple infinitely more elaborate in adornment and dimensions.

Above all, beware of materialism, and bear ever in mind that exquisite as is its organization, wonderful as are its functions, without the

divine particle--the breath of *life*—in fine without a *soul*, the brain is but a clod of matter, inanimate and useless as the dust we tread on. Well might Mephistopheles say to the student—

Wer will was lebendigs erkennen und beschreiben
Sucht erst den Geist heraus zu treiben,
Dann had er die Theile in seiner Hand,
Fehlt leider ! nur das geistige Band ;
Encheiresin naturæ, neunt's die Chemie,
Spottet ihrer selbst and weiss nicht wie.

which may be thrown into the following English verses—

He that would understand ought living,
Begins by out the spirit driving ;
The *parts* he has then for dissection
Wanting, alas ! the divine connection.
Encheiresin naturæ, the chemists sigh,
And mock themselves and know not why.

FAUST.

M E S M E R I S M .

OTHERWISE CALLED ANIMAL MAGNETISM.

ALTHOUGH we find traces of this science in the most ancient times, in the Orphic mysteries, the

oracles of Greece, and Druidical rites of the Celtic tribes, although, consciously or unconsciously exerted, the magnetic influence has beyond all doubt from the remotest ages played by no means an obscure part in the working of so called miracles, and the cure of multifarious diseases, not to mention prophecies, oracles, sorcery, fortune-telling, and other wonders ascribed to supernatural causes by the ignorance of priests and laymen, unacquainted with the rudiments of philosophy; it was Frederick Anthony Mesmer who was born to become the discoverer of the most glorious principle of nature with which we are as yet acquainted.

Without entering into any discussion (which indeed my limits do not permit of) as to the existence or non-existence of magnetic fluid, I shall now simply give my own opinion of the nature of this extraordinary power deduced from extensive observation, reading and inquiry, viz., that magnetism is the powerful exertion of *will* combined with a lively faith to produce a given effect upon another body, and that this exercise of volition is, whatever may be the mode in which it acts, the *primary* cause of the said effects.

And these are, briefly, a sensation of calm,

drowsiness, sleep, sleepwaking in which the patient can walk, converse, &c.; deeper states, clairvoyance, capability of reading with closed eyes or through other objects; mental traveling and knowledge of remote localities; intuition, consciousness of derangements in the patient's own or other person's corporeal system; pre-voyance or foreseeing future events, accompanied at times by intense sympathy with the magnetiser, and consciousness of all his sensations; phreno-magnetism or the excitement of the different feelings, by contact with the appropriate organs in the magnetic-trance (discovered by Mr. Atkinson) and strikingly conformatory of the truth of phrenology, and last not least relief, and cure from pain and disease of various kinds, with or without sleep, surgical operations and amputation of limbs without even the knowledge of the sufferer.*

* I trust the reader will not doubt my seriousness in the above remarks, on account of the following epigram, which occurred to me at a *soiree musicale* a short time since—

THE MARCH OF MESMERISM.

Amputation now loses all pain,
Legs are cut off like slices of melon,
And hanging is viewed with disdain,
For Jack Ketch mesmerises the felon!

Descriptions of most of these phenomena founded upon innumerable authentic cases will be found in 'The Impostor.' So far from being exaggerated, many of the incidents are really deprived of still more astonishing details. The *manner* of magnetising is also more than once described and the philosophical conclusions to which mesmeric phenomena inevitably lead the sound and unprejudiced logician, sufficiently clearly pointed out to render any repetition here necessary.

And let me entreat you, sceptical reader, candidly to reflect that *experience* is the best, the only test of the possibility of a fact. Experimentalise for yourself with patient desire of knowledge, be not daunted by a failure or two, nor grudge to the attainment of conviction of a truth more glorious than all other sciences put together, the trouble you would accord to the most trifling experiment in mechanics or chemistry. The author of this work, nay every one of the most eminent magnetisers of the day were once as sceptical as yourself.

I will not insult your reason by attempting to disprove or even hold up to the ridicule, of

which the notion is so susceptible, the absurd theory of *Satanic agency*, started by certain brain-clouded fanatics and adopted by many half-educated persons—no I trust that, once more to quote my dear Goëthe, in these enlightened times—

“ The northern phantom man now scorns,
Where see you hoofs or tail or horns ?”

but I would warn you—

Firstly, against the obstinate prejudices of the medical faculty, who are invariably opposed to every new remedy that interferes with their practice. A very *feasible* excuse, it is true; but not one which ought to influence an unbiassed judgment. See Sir. E. B, Lytton's letter in the New Monthly and my chapter in the foregoing work on the *Water cure*, written curiously enough, almost contemporaneously.

Secondly. Be not too hasty in attributing imposture to any particular case, or to conclude from one instance of the kind, that *all* are so. The greatest wonders of magnetism are beyond the power of charlatans and may

be tested beyond the possibility of deception.*

Thirdly, as a mental preparation for the wonders about to reveal themselves, consider gravely the incomprehensible nature of dreams, imagination, presentiment and natural somnambulism (of which the simple state of magnetism is but an artificial production.) Think how often in visions of the night you have seen places and people never seen before, imagined with almost the vividness of reality far distant scenes and times, in the very act of speaking found the words taken as it were from your lips by another, the uncomfortable sensations preceding some dire catastrophe, the thought or conversation upon some particular individual who at that moment knocks at the door or sends you a letter, the nightly gambols of the fearless sleep-walker—and who has not known at least one instance of the kind. Talk

* A very sceptical friend of mine having witnessed several public and private exhibitions of the celebrated clairvoyant, Calliste, offered him a considerable sum (ten thousand francs) for his secret, under an inviolable promise of secrecy. "I have no secret," replied the astonished young somnambulist, "I wish I had!"

to me no more of 'odd coincidences,' but think, observe, compare, and candidly acknowledge that—

“ There are more things in earth and heaven,
Horatio,
Than are dreamed of in thy philosophy.”

For further information on the subject, I refer you to the works of Mesmer himself, and to those of Townshend, Colquhoun, Deleuze, Teste, and for recent cases 'The Critic,' an ably conducted weekly, and 'The Zoist,' a quarterly journal, edited by the famous Dr. Elliotson whose strenuous exertions in the cause of magnetism, it would be indeed unjust to pass over however widely we may differ in our views. Whether the doctor will ever reconcile himself to having a mind, or I shall ever be content to live and think without one, yet remains to be seen—with many other wonders.

THE VESTIGES OF CREATION.

HAVING alluded to this remarkable work, it was my intention to have considered the prin-

ciples it advocates more at length in this appendix. Time however and space compel me to defer the intention for the present.

A rough outline of its contents may be found in the burlesque of my hero, the work itself however displays great research, and ingenuity. It certainly does not present us with a lucid and harmonious system of nature, but it is a great stride forwards in the generalization, and popular treatment of astronomy, geology, and other sciences bearing upon cosmogony. In abusing it so fiercely, the quarterly reviews seemed altogether to overlook the prodigious labour and difficulty of condensing digesting and classifying so vast an amount of facts; but with their usual pettiness of soul were only eager to expose the geological and physiological errors of the author whose work has at least the merit of a certain degree of originality in conception, and decidedly affords amusement in perusal.

On the probability of the theory of development, I am not prepared to offer a hasty opinion, though I must confess that from an examination of embryo brains, and fœtus, made by me very recently, for the express purpose, at the King's College Museum, I was induced

to believe that at no time does the human brain from the first period that it becomes perceptible, resemble either that of a fish, a reptile, or a bird. This however is a subject for future discussion, Meanwhile 'The Vestiges' are not only clever in themselves, but will, we trust, be the cause of cleverness in others, and lead to still greater and bolder attempts at the unravelment of nature's mystic web.*

THE GAMBLING HOUSE.

There are some dark truths that cannot be too often repeated, one of them is the fact that gambling tables are the resort of but two classes ---sharpers and dupes. There are exceptions to every rule, to this they are especially rare.

* Mrs. Trollope, the entertaining authoress, has been before hand with me, I see, in making fun of the vestiges. (See the 'Attractive Man,' vol. 3.) I should be sorry to suspect the off-hand fair one of being "unable to make anything else of them," as a lovely friend of mine sarcastically (not to say spitefully) insinuates.

It is a common case to suppose that there can be no cheating at *rouge et noir*. This is a gross mistake, the whole is a cheat, the chances to begin with, are against you, and the watchful *croupier* has it in his power by passing a card, in a way which, if cleverly executed, the keenest eye is unable to detect, to give victory to whichever color he pleases. Of course he will always, if possible, give it to that on which his quiet eye has detected the fewest stakes. Were it not for the *decoys* it would be a safe game to play always with the weaker side, though even that would require great practice. As it is, play is madness. Roulette is a still grosser swindle. A pedal, worked by the knee of the *croupier*, decides the color and the number. In fine, it is playing against destiny. Dice are still more delusive toys—it is so easy to measure their angles, to spin them, and ascertain that they are genuine---but then it is so much easier for the demon of the table to change them a dozen times for those falsely cut or loaded!

These and many other equally ingenious tricks were kindly explained to me lately, and fully illustrated by a gentleman of remarkable talents; especially for conjuring and mechani-

cal contrivance. They have been often exposed before—alas! how often has it been proclaimed that in the juggle of thimble rigs at Ascot, the pea is in reality always in the hand of the man, until the moment of raising the thimble ---yet Gulls are found. What is known to be easier than to establish signals at whist, still are misguided youths found ready to play for high stakes with people they meet perchance for the first time—aye even with man and wife!---“But then at the house of such an honorable man”---O innocence! let one who has been fleeced, unless your purse be longer than your patience, warn you in time. Better go dabble in railways, or bet against the favorite for the St. Leger---the last is a sure card.

POPULAR ELECTIONS.

Say, does the present registration,
Or does it not want alteration ?
Should gentlemen, who tenant chambers,
At fifty or a hundred guineas,
Be voteless, whilst the snob who clambers
Up to a garret, poor, and thin, is
Renting a ten pound tenement,
Whose lodgers mayhap, clear his rent,
Goes to the hustings gives a plumper,
(For value paid), then in a bumper
The placeman treats who on him preyed,
Or the patrician fool, who would, but cannot
aid ?
Or say, should gold at all decide
What rights be given or denied ?
Or knowledge, conduct, education
Endow with voice to guide a nation ?
Ho ! fresh electors, registration,
Perchance they'll sell their votes, with more
discrimination !

NEWSPAPER LITERATURE.

In the frontispiece to this volume I have designed an imaginary meeting of the London journals, in shapes emblematic of their several

idiosyncrasies. It is scarcely necessary to observe that *The Times* is the gentleman balancing himself in the centre. *The Times* are out of joint, as may be seen by his knees. *Punch* is riding a joke to death, as usual, in the back ground. The '*Asinæum*,' (immortalized in Paul Clifford) may be easily recognized. The *Quarterlies* are asleep in the foreground, (with the exception of the *Westminster*, who is very wide awake, and absent on a railway excursion,) fat, overgrown, heavy looking creatures they are indeed, the gimlets in their hands remind us of their irradicable boring propensities. The monthly magazines are shelved. Blackwood and Bentley are standing on their heads as a last effort to amuse the public, albeit in vastly different styles; whilst Fraser may be recognized by the *tonsure*, and the New Monthly by his whiskers. The reader will have no difficulty in deciphering the rest.---Addio!





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